

INSIDE'S

THE MAGAZINE

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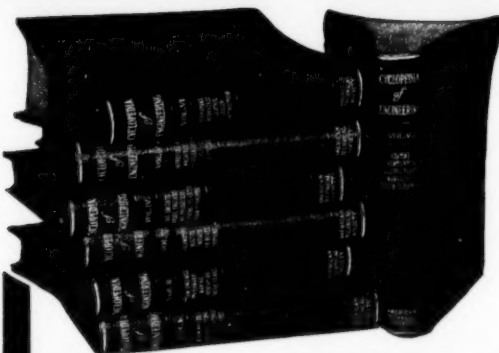
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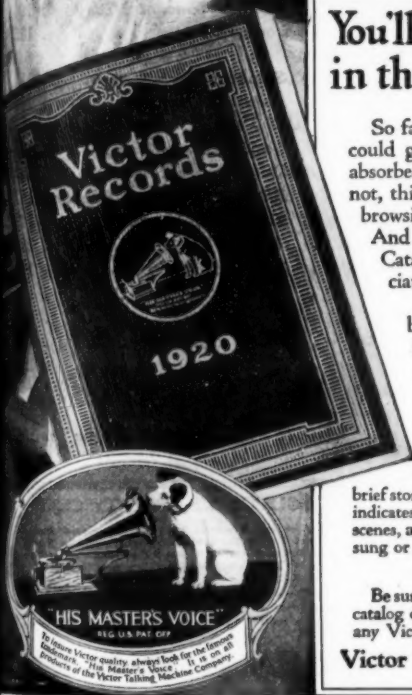
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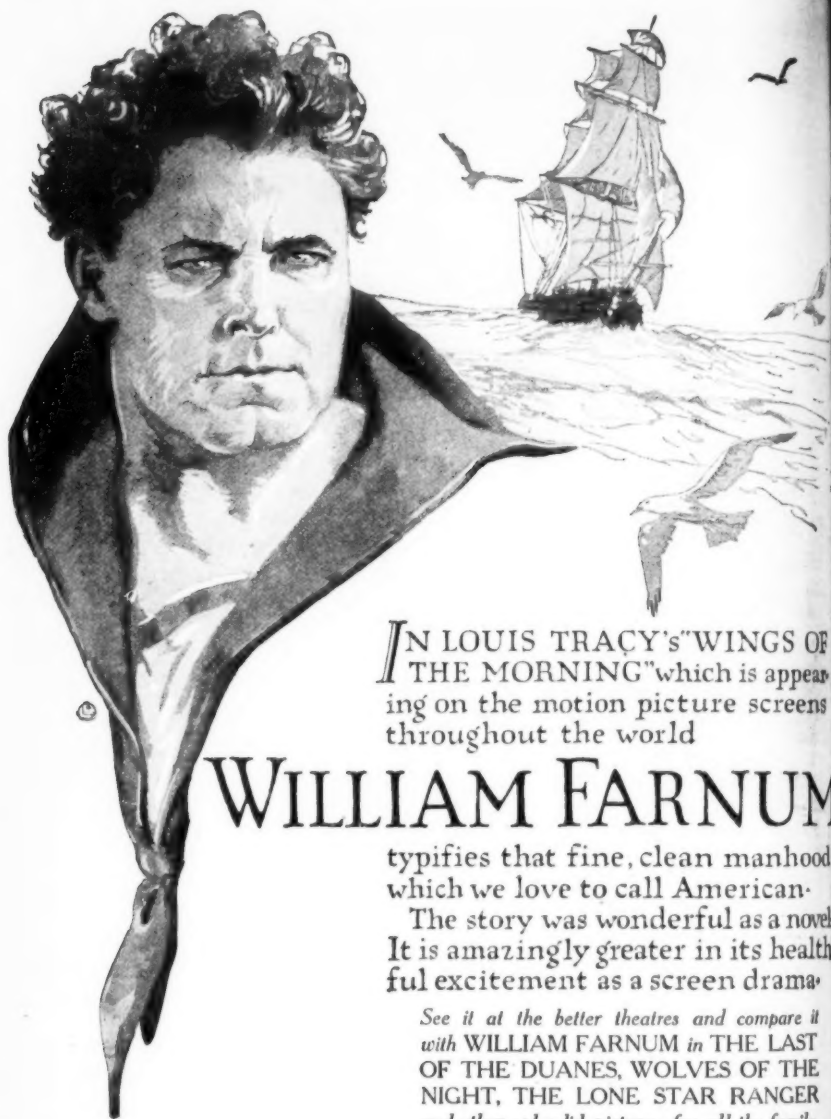
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VOL. XLIV.

JANUARY, 1920.

No. 6.



The Woman Without a Shadow

By Lillian Bennet-Thompson
and George Hubbard

CHAPTER I.

IT didn't matter especially to Mrs. Barrett, of course. She knew Eve Delevan only slightly, and she had never spoken to Brand Fielding in her life. Besides, she was married, and, incidentally, in love with her husband. Yet, because no woman has ever achieved complete indifference at the spectacle of another woman carrying off the most assiduously angled-for prize in the matrimonial sea, she turned a quick, interested glance over her shoulder.

"Do you see them there, just beyond the door?" she asked eagerly. "That lamp on the next table shines in my eyes, but I'm *sure* it's Fielding. And I'm pretty sure it's Miss Delevan with him. I saw her when we came in, but the man's back was toward me, and at first, I naturally concluded that he was young Thornton."

"Why 'naturally?'" inquired Claire Whitmore. "Ned Thornton's nice enough and sufficiently good looking, but Eve wouldn't waste any time on him, you may be sure of that."

"Yet she had an engagement with

him for this afternoon. I heard her make it. I was standing just behind them at Bangert's Galleries yesterday, and I distinctly heard her promise to be home at four o'clock to-day."

"Oh, well!" Mrs. Whitmore shrugged her shoulders. "She'd hardly bother with small fry like Thornton if she thought she had any real chance with Brand Fielding."

"Is he—is he," Mrs. Barrett leaned forward, lowering her voice, "well, is he as dreadful as people say?"

Again Claire shrugged.

"Worse, my dear, much worse! But Eve can't afford to be too fussy. She hasn't a penny, and her tastes would put a Sheba to shame. When a man is starving, he can't stop to demand new bills, straight from the government bureau of engraving and printing; he grabs what he can get."

"Then she'll marry him?"

Claire laughed.

"Marry him? I should say she will, if she can get him. But I wonder——"

And at the little table, just beyond the wide, curtained doorway, Eve Delevan was wondering, too. A thin spi-

ral of aromatic smoke, ascending from the tip of Brand Fielding's cigarette, spread out into an undulating gray haze before his face and made it difficult for her to see it clearly. But she knew that even in a strong light his expression would have told her little, if anything. Some one had once said of him that his face was the mask he wore in public, and no one had ever been able to get him to take it off.

But Eve was aware that he was watching her, that his eyes, cool, slow, inscrutable, had turned from her scarcely for a moment since they had entered the tea room. Doubtless he was appraising her, estimating whether she would be worth to him the millions he had to offer. Her teeth caught her lower lip sharply; on the carpet under her chair, one slender foot tapped a quick tattoo; but there was no hint of irritation in the vague smile that lay in her eyes and touched the curve of her red mouth.

"I'm just a little tired of the city," his deep, rather harsh voice was saying. "Once in a while, once in a very great while, 'the red gods call to me,' and I want to get away from all this clutter of asphalt and stone and humans. Generally, about this time of year, I take a little run out to the Circle D Ranch to get a breath of fresh air, and I'm thinking seriously of going next week."

"Yes?" she said. "I should think that might be very pleasant."

With a swift gesture, he swept the smoke haze from between them.

"You haven't seen the ranch in some time, have you?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Not since I was ten years old. Mother died then and father got rid of the property as soon as he could. I recall dimly the visit you made to overlook the land and stock. You"—she flashed him a smile—"seem to have,

changed hardly at all, but I suppose the place has."

"Better come out and see for yourself," he suggested. "It's not a bad trip and the ranch house is comfortable—really very decent. I've made some slight changes in the buildings, of course, modernized them a bit and that sort of thing; but except for the additional acreage planted for crops, the surroundings are just the same. At the full of the moon, one can still stand on the veranda and see the reflection of the death fire of Waunemahee. Do you remember how you used to watch it?"

She did remember, very clearly. The legend of the Princess Waunemahee, who, because of the wanton betrayal of her lover, had been burned at the stake at the sacred council of the nine chiefs, had always possessed a peculiar fascination for her. As a child, she had stood, night after night, on the veranda of the ranch house, and watched the top of Council Rock, where the faint, reflected light of the mystic fire glowed and paled and glowed again, until, when the ruddy light flickered out altogether, she had crept off to bed, shaking with an agony of superstitious pity and fear—pity for the unfortunate Waunemahee, whose perfidy the sun god had revealed; fear lest some mischievous prank of her own be punished in a manner equally terrible. She had been a sensitive child, and the oft-repeated story of the legendary princess had made an indelible impression on her mind. Even now, the memory sent a little stiff shudder over her; but she laughed easily.

"I used to watch the fire by night, and by day, keep looking over my shoulder to see if the curse of Waunemahee had fallen on me," she said. "Every time I was more than ordinarily outrageous, I used to wonder whether the sun god would take away my shadow, as he took hers, and shrivel

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me up into a little, black, weazened thing. Does Waunemahee's ghost still wail for her lost love, Sholokemis?"

"Better come and see for yourself," Fielding repeated. He crushed the fire from the end of his cigarette against his plate and opened the flat leather case that lay on the table before him. "It happens," he said slowly, his level eyes on hers, "that I intend to present the ranch as a wedding gift to my wife. I should very much like your opinion of it, Eve. If I make up the party for the trip, will you join it?"

Eve Delevan had been well schooled in concealing her emotions. In her face, in her voice, there was not the faintest trace of the triumph she felt, as she answered cordially:

"Why, of course. It would be delightful! And I think it's charming of you to ask me."

So another item in the list of Brand Fielding's possessions was to be displayed for her inspection and approval! His New York house she had already seen. The new mural decorations for the vast ballroom had supplied the ostensible reason for his inviting a number of people for tea, a reason which Eve shrewdly suspected was merely a pretext for getting her there. He had other places, too, somberly magnificent in architecture and furnishing. Ned Thornton, who had done the ballroom decorations, spoke of the Long Island house as "a young palace." Eve had passed it. The outside was certainly handsome and imposing. The mistress of those establishments would have no need to consult the balance in her check book.

"Suppose we say next Wednesday, then." With a glance, Fielding summoned the waiter, paid the check, and rose to draw back Eve's chair. "Is there any one you would particularly care to include in the party? I had thought that perhaps Mrs. Whitmore——"

It occurred to Eve that almost any other man on earth would have employed the passive form of the verb. The subtle implication that it was her party, not his, did not escape her. She permitted herself a covert little smile.

"Why not?" she agreed carelessly. After all, what did it matter who went? "I'm rather fond of Claire."

"I shall write to her this evening, then," he said.

He dispatched the note by special messenger just before dinner, and, directly after, Claire called him up at his club.

"That's what you were urging this afternoon at the Ritz when I saw you talking so earnestly," she said, when she had solemnly vowed to him that nothing on earth or in heaven could prevent *her* acceptance of the invitation, and that, conversely, nothing in heaven or on earth could drag Nate more than two miles from the Winter Garden for more than twelve hours at a stretch. "I'm so glad you induced Eve to say yes."

"So am I," he returned.

"Of course, you would be. Do you," she paused, hesitated, and then abruptly dared, "do you always get what you want, Mr. Fielding?"

"Always, dear lady," he answered her gravely, "always."

"Yes, I expect you do," Claire said to herself, "and I'm afraid you're going to get it this time. Only, I wish you didn't want Eve. She may be heartless and mercenary and calculating, and all that, but she's too good for *you*, money or no money."

She sighed as she hung up the receiver. In spite of all Eve's faults and shortcomings, she was genuinely fond of the girl, and she would have been glad to help her, had it been possible. But what could she do? Claire Whitmore had long before realized the futility of argument and example where Eve Delevan was concerned.

"If only you wouldn't be so downright cold-blooded about it, Eve!" she had wailed once. "I know it's a frightfully hard position, but there must be some other way out of it."

"For example?" Eve had inquired pleasantly. "Just what would you suggest?"

"Why—why——"

"Exactly. It's all very well to sentimentalize, Claire, but I'm facing facts, not theories, and I may as well face them squarely and sanely. I'm utterly unfitted for any sort of remunerative work; I have neither the training nor the natural ability. I might get a job in some office where I'd receive fifteen or twenty dollars a week, but I shouldn't earn that much; I shouldn't be worth it to my employer. I'd muddle his accounts if I tried to keep them; and I couldn't learn stenography to save my life. Besides, of what earthly use would twenty dollars a week be to me?"

"But you could marry some really nice man, couldn't you?" Claire had insisted, and added sententiously: "Money doesn't buy happiness, Eve."

Eve had conceded that it didn't.

"It does, however, buy the decencies of life, my friend, and these your 'really nice man' would probably be quite unable to provide. Can you see me in a four-room Bronx flat, cooking kidney stew for the supper of my lord and master, and trolleying down to the market in the morning to save two cents on a head of cabbage? Or perhaps you think I'd enjoy living in a studio in Washington Square, with a three-ring gas plate and no bathtub."

And Claire, quite unable to see the woods for the trees, and yet helplessly aware that there was some sophistry at the bottom of Eve's bland irony, had given up the argument in despair. Eve was right, in that it seemed impossible to picture her in any but an extravagantly expensive environment. She fitted into her luxurious surroundings

as perfectly as a jewel into its setting. In any other, she would have seemed as much out of place as some rare exotic plant potted in a tin can. She had been reared in and for luxury, and for nothing else. She had known nothing else, and she experienced no slightest desire to know anything else.

The death of her mother had been almost coincident with her father's spectacular acquisition of a colossal fortune. His indolent, untidy wife had for years proved a source of strained irritation to Hugh Delevan, and when freedom and almost undreamed-of wealth came to him at one and the same time, he found himself confronted by the problem of a ten-year-old daughter whose chief accomplishments seemed to be the ability to ride like a centaur, swim like a mermaid, swear like a Gloucester fisherman, and spell with quaintness and originality.

Hugh Delevan blamed himself severely for having allowed the strained relations which existed between himself and his wife to stand in the way of his exercising proper supervision over the child. Suppose she should grow up into the sort of woman her mother had been?

Appalled at the bare idea, he took prompt steps in what he considered was the right direction. He sold the ranch and whisked Eve off to the city. He bought a large house and installed in it a regiment of servants, maids, governesses, tutors.

"I'll have no wild Indian disgracing me," he declared. "Teach her how to look and talk and behave like a gentlewoman. Begin at the beginning, and bring her up to know that she's the daughter of Hugh Delevan."

His orders were carried out with, perhaps, more zeal than he had anticipated. Eve was taught that in order to reflect credit on a name that stood for millions, she must do nothing for herself. The lesson came rather hard,

just at first, but every one labored so faithfully at instructing her, that she soon learned. It is comparatively easy for skillful fingers to work plastic, if raw, material, such as Eve Delevan was at that time, into the finished and complete type of parasite. And for fifteen years, Eve had never done for herself anything that any one else could possibly do for her.

CHAPTER II.

Tuesday afternoon, when Eve came in from a late tea, she found Ned Thornton waiting for her. She had not seen him since the previous Thursday, when, in order to accept Brand Fielding's invitation, she had deliberately broken the engagement made at the Bangert Galleries; and she had a momentary sense of disquiet as the maid informed her of Thornton's presence. Then she shrugged, slipped out of her coat, and went into the reception room.

"It was tremendously nice of you to wait," she greeted him cordially. "I suppose Aimée told you I should be home early. I expected to come, but I was detained. There were so many people to see and talk to, so much to be said, that it was after five o'clock before I had any idea at all of the hour. And then I flew, because I'm dining out and going somewhere to see a play, and——"

"And, consequently, you have no time at all to spare for me," he interrupted her quietly. "I understand, and I shan't keep you. I stopped in merely to say good-by, and to ask if, perhaps, you would not tell me why you hadn't let me know you were going."

"Going?"

"I met Mr. Fielding, and he told me of your projected western trip," he explained. "Why didn't you mention it to me, Eve?"

She was pulling off her gloves and

smoothing out the fingers. At the hint of reproach in his question, she stiffened a little.

"Why should I mention it to you?" she asked. "In the first place, I've not seen you; in the second, it didn't occur to me that you'd be interested."

"Are you quite sure it didn't, Eve?"

Her right shoulder twitched into an almost imperceptible shrug, a movement that was characteristic when she was irritated or annoyed.

"Well, then," she amended, "I thought it was really none of your business where I went."

"Or with whom, I presume," he added. "Isn't it any man's business when the woman he loves, the woman he wants for his wife, plans an extended trip as the guest of some other man, and carefully neglects to say anything about it?"

Eve smiled sweetly, too sweetly.

"I can't help it if you are foolish enough to imagine you want to marry me, can I? Surely, I'm not responsible for your vagaries. But let's not discuss that question; we settled it some time ago."

"You said it was settled," he corrected. "As far as I'm concerned, it will never be settled until——"

"Oh, please!" She raised one slim hand in languid protest. "I really can't go over that ground again. And you must excuse me. I have to dress."

"I'm going directly. But first, I want you to answer me one question, Eve. Is it your intention to marry Brand Fielding?"

"That," she said coolly, "is another thing that does not concern you. And may I point out"—again that too-sweet smile—"that you are presumptuous, Mr. Thornton?"

"Because if it is," he went on grimly, "you will marry him for his money."

"Yes?" she said, with an insolent raising of her heavy lids.

"Yes," he returned doggedly. "I've asked you to marry me and——"

"And I have refused."

"And you refused, as you say, because I'm poor."

"Exactly. Although perhaps you will concede that I might possibly have had other reasons."

"I can't give you a dozen different establishments, as Fielding can, but I can give you love, a decent, clean, honest love that will——"

She laughed outright.

"It isn't legal tender, Ned," she said. "It won't pay the rent."

The line between his fine brows deepened; he took a single step toward her.

"Don't you ever think of anything but money, Eve?" he demanded. "Does nothing else mean anything to you?"

She spread her hands.

"I don't want to have to think about money," she said. "That's one perfectly good reason why I won't marry you. I don't know how to think about money. And I've no intention of trying to learn."

"Then you mean to marry Fielding?"

She did not answer, nor did she speak when Thornton repeated the question. A flush crept over his boyish face.

"You don't love him," he said, very low, "and you do love me. You won't admit it, even to yourself, but you do. And yet you'd marry Fielding, sell yourself to him for money—his millions!"

"Isn't that better than giving myself away for nothing?" she inquired flipantly. "It seems to me to be a far better bargain. Do you mind going now? It's getting late."

"I don't see how you can do it," he said slowly. "You're young; you're beautiful; you're clever; but you're hard—you must be. I wouldn't believe it at first, but it must be true. It's just money that you want, and to get it, you'll sell yourself to the highest bidder. I suppose," he went on bitterly,

"if the devil wanted to buy your soul, you'd dispose of it to him!"

"Certainly!" he returned promptly. "That is, if he offered enough. Souls are such intangible things, you know, Ned. I'd much rather have a nice, comfortable balance in the bank. And now, if you've quite done dissecting me, will you let me go and dress for my dinner?"

For a moment he stood facing her, a pleading light in his brown eyes, his hands half outstretched. Then, with a brusque gesture, he turned away.

"Oh, what's the use?" he said, half to himself. "If you've made up your mind to go through with this thing, what can I say or do to change it?"

"Nothing," she said briskly. Then, she repeated in a different tone: "Nothing, Ned. And I didn't make up my mind; it was made up for me. I didn't deliberately choose to be what I am. Perhaps these"—she touched a cluster of orchids at her breast—"would have preferred to be red geraniums and grow in a window box or in some sweet, old-fashioned garden, but, being what they are, they have to make the best of it. And," with a swift return to her habitual cool insolence, "they're not so badly off, you know. Think how much attention they get, how carefully they are tended and looked after. They are expensive things, and therefore desirable. No connoisseur ever looks twice at a red geranium."

She held out her hand.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but you *must* go. I shall be frightfully late, as it is."

His fingers closed over hers in a grip that made her wince.

"All right, I'll go," he said. "But don't think that this is the end between you and me. It's not. It's only the beginning. I'm going to find a way to break through this cursed shell of artificiality in which you've incased yourself. I don't know how, but I'm going to do it, going to find the real you,

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that's hidden under all this shallow sham. And when I do, I shall never let you go!" His brown eyes, clear and earnest, held hers compellingly for an instant. Then, without another word, he turned on his heel and strode out of the house.

CHAPTER III.

Built on the rise of a gentle incline that marked the first upward sweep of the land toward the mountains to the north, the Circle D ranch house struck a note perfectly in harmony with its surroundings. At first glance, one received the impression of the crude, the exceedingly primitive, but this was merely the outward semblance disguising the luxury of every appointment.

The house itself was built of huge, brown, spruce slabs with the bark still on them, and roofed with dark-green shingles that came down obliquely to overhang the flagged veranda. In front, the ground sloped away to the bottom of the smiling valley that, surrounded on all sides by towering snow-capped peaks, was like a Gargantuan emerald cupped deep in a claw of platinum. A wide expanse of green lawns melted smoothly into fields of ripening grain that rippled in the breeze like the slow swell of a summer sea. The road that led to the nearest railway station, a good thirty miles away, wound sinuously through acres of ripening wheat and oats, past grassy meadows where sleek cattle grazed, and dwindled to a mere silver thread in the distance.

The vegetable garden and the servants' quarters were at the back of the house. At the side, climbing the almost-imperceptible slope, was a terrace, paved with flags, between the cracks of which moss cropped out greenly. A low, retaining wall found its upper boundary, and over the top of this, a little stream that brawled its way across

miles of meadow and woodland, foamed joyously, to leap down into a deep, ferny basin. "Singing Water," Fielding called it, and the music of its swift, tinkling fall was audible in every part of the house. Within the house, all the charm of simplicity had been cunningly maintained and enhanced, while no detail that made for comfort and convenience had been omitted.

The place was a revelation to Eve Delevan, who had not seen it since the month succeeding her mother's death, and who remembered it as the spacious but crude home that had housed her untrammelled childhood. She had been prepared to see changes, of course, but she had looked for nothing like this, and she said so with a frankness that was unusual for her.

Lounging at ease in a chaise longue drawn up before the blaze in the immense stone fireplace at one end of the living room, Fielding followed her gaze as it traveled slowly about.

"You like it, then, Eve?" he asked. "You approve of what I've done?"

He had asked for the opinion of none of the others of the party; he seemed concerned with Eve alone.

"Yes, I like it," she answered. "I don't know exactly what you've done nor how you did it, but the transformation is marvelous. Why, I remember this room"—her light laugh rippled out—"as a great barn of a place, with rough, ugly walls and a rougher, uglier floor. The fire was the only attractive thing in it. I hated it unless big logs were blazing, and in the summer I'd never come into it willingly, it was so bleak and bare looking."

"You came into it willingly once, if my memory serves me," Fielding reminded her. "You ran in and had to be—well, coaxed out."

Eve wrinkled her smooth brow in an effort to remember. Then she laughed.

"Oh, yes," she said, "so I did. 'Coaxed out' is an agreeable way of de-

scribing my exit, though." She turned to Mrs. Whitmore, who, a cigarette between her plump fingers, was striving to resist the combined soporific influences of the air, the heat of the fire, and the yielding cushions of her chair.

"You know, Claire, I liked my own way, and, on the particular occasion to which Mr. Fielding has reference, my own way happened not to be my father's. I had been told that I was to go to New York to live. I had been dressed and made ready to go, and I decided that I didn't want to go. Father took me by the hand and led me downstairs. I broke away from him and ran in here. I had literally to be dragged out. And I kicked and screamed and bit and scratched all the way to the station." She smiled, reminiscently tolerant. "I must have been a charming child," she said. "No wonder father swore, and demanded of all the gods at once where I had learned such 'didos,' I think he called them. He said it was high time I was removed from the pernicious influences surrounding me, and he proceeded to remove me as speedily as possible. I remember that he wouldn't even let me say good-by to a playmate of mine whom I adored, a little boy named—what was his name, Mr. Fielding?"

Fielding was lighting a cigarette.

"Surely you ought to recall the name of your first admirer, Eve," he said, blowing out a thin streak of smoke. "There have been so many since that one cannot expect you to remember them; but the first, the very first who worshiped at beauty's shrine and begged you to fly with him, far from tyrannical parents who would rudely shatter love's young dream—"

"Of course!" Eve cried out delightedly. "That's it exactly! That's why I was so furious that father wouldn't let me say good-by. We'd planned an elopement, Peter and I, and—oh!" she interrupted herself, "his name was Pe-

ter, and I called him Pet. He detested it. Well, Peter was going to rescue me so that I wouldn't have to go East. He was to be waiting at Council Rock with his pony, and I was to meet him there. When father wouldn't let me go, Peter followed the buckboard all the way to the station, and every little while he'd call out to me to jump. I should have, too," she added, with relish, "if I could have got free."

"What a pity you didn't!" remarked Mrs. Stanton, from the other side of the hearth. "Think how beautifully romantic it would have been!"

"Yes," agreed Eve lazily, "a broken leg or two is always romantic, isn't it?" She cherished no particular regard for Mrs. Stanton, a remarkably handsome young woman who possessed a large fortune, which she had inherited, and a husband, a number of years her senior, whom, rumor had it, she had married just to show society that she could interest him in something besides geology. He adored her, and she treated him with the same bored toleration that she might have accorded a too-affectionate dog.

He was a silent man, inclined to prolonged fits of absent-mindedness, but there was about him something wistfully unsophisticated, a sort of child-like innocence of thought and speech that was oddly appealing; and Eve thought he deserved better of Fate than this handsome, clever wife of his who was so obviously bored whenever he made a tentative excursion into the conversation. He ought, Eve felt, to have married some small, wrenlike person, who would have fussed over him and thought him wonderful and let him potter around among his specimens to his heart's content. He belonged, somehow, to an atmosphere of smoking jackets and brier pipes and alligator-skin slippers, not to evening clothes and cigars and patent-leather pumps. His very tie, sliding surreptitiously askew,

protested that he was out of place in Brand Fielding's somberly magnificent living room, and not once since dinner had he ventured a remark. At the sound of his wife's voice, however, he roused himself from his abstraction long enough to ask Eve anxiously:

"What makes you think that a broken leg would be romantic, Miss Delevan? Is that really your opinion?"

"Don't bother, Fessy," Lucia Stanton chided him. "You're not a bit interested in Eve's escapades."

"Fessy" was her nickname for him. No one knew what his real name was; every one addressed him as Professor Stanton.

"Am I not, Lucia?" He glanced from Eve to his wife and back to Eve again. "Really, I thought I was."

"Oh, tell him, Eve," said Lucia impatiently. "Tell him how you conducted yourself all the way to the station and then, like the little Indian you were, yelled out of the train window to your young renegade lover that you were coming back to him."

Eve shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm afraid I did," she confessed. "I promised at the top of my lungs to come back and marry Peter and make him chief of the tribe."

"Well, you've come back, haven't you?" observed Lucia maliciously. "And to marry Peter, of course."

"Tribe? What tribe? Claire Whitmore interposed hastily. She had caught the look in Eve's eyes. "You're not descended from any real Indians, are you, Eve?" She was merely trying to create a diversion and did not for a moment expect a reply in the affirmative. She raised her eyebrows in surprise when Eve answered carelessly:

"My mother's great grandmother was the daughter of a chief, I believe. I don't know of just what tribe; I was never sufficiently interested to inquire."

"Fancy!" murmured Lucia. "Real

Indian ancestors! That's where you got that hair, Eve, and those straight black brows, and," she added, "that propensity for collecting scalps."

But the barb missed; Eve was not even listening. She was frowning a little, as if lost in thought. A moment later, she pushed back her chair.

"The fire is too hot," she remarked over her shoulder to Brand Fielding, and calmly walked out of the room.

CHAPTER IV.

It was cool enough on the veranda. A brisk breeze swept down out of the west, bearing with it the tang of frost-brushed spruces and the faint, aromatic odor of pines. The presage of autumn hung in the air. There was a vague suggestion of chill in the silken swishing of the wind-stirred grain that, almost inaudibly, whispered across the open spaces; in the hard, bright gleam of the moonlight that lay upon the landscape like a diaphanous silver mantle; in the sharp resonance of the flag paving of the veranda, as Eve's small heels struck it.

Eve crossed to the eastern corner and stood looking out over a world that was all keen contrasts, like a Japanese print. The mountains, looming in serried silhouette against the sky, were draped in sable, crowned in shining glory. Closer at hand, the stables and corral spread like definite dark blots on a smooth sheet of white. The shadows of tree and shrub and bush were sharply etched, black velvet on silver. One of the riding horses, turned out of the paddock to graze for the night, strayed across the lawn, head down, a blurred huddle of blackness. Eve's eyes followed the slowly moving beast until it vanished behind a clump of spruces. Then her glance went on and out, past the stables, past the moon-drenched sea of grain, to the monolith that was Council Rock, pointing skyward like a gi-

gantic finger, dissevered from the hand. Council Rock!

She frowned a little as the tentacles of memory tightened. It was fifteen years since she and the boy Peter had raced their tough little ponies from its base to the entrance to Thumb Cañon; fifteen years since they had climbed that sinuous, secret path to its top, and, looking down in all the blissful arrogance of youth, she had told him of the wonderful things she would do when she grew up and owned the whole of the fertile valley with its girdle of mountain peaks. Then, there had not been the slightest doubt in her mind that one day it would be hers. Had not Peter promised to get it for her?

Well—and she smiled to herself—her youthful boast had not been such a vain one; the boundaries of the Circle D Ranch extended far beyond the valley. Brand Fielding owned it, all of it. It would be part of the price he would bid for her, if he bid at all. And, of course, he would, else why had he brought her out here? He was not the man to waste time on anything or any one. Whatever he did was undertaken with some clearly defined end in view. Unless he desired to marry her, he would not have paid her attentions so conspicuous that there could be but one interpretation put on them. But he purposed making very sure of her; evidently, he had no intention of risking a rebuff. As if any sane woman would dream of refusing him!

He was not ill-looking. Rather tall and heavily built, he carried himself well, and his manner of cynical reserve somehow seemed to strengthen the impression of youth created by the contrast of his heavily grayed hair and almost unlined face. An impression of physical youth, that is. Mentally, he was mature. Spiritually, he was old. The soul that lurked behind the impenetrable mask of his eyes had sometimes seemed to Eve to be as old as Egypt and as mys-

teriously sinister as the crudely brutal figures of her ancient hieroglyphs. His actual age in years must have been somewhere between forty-five and fifty, but except for the added graying of his hair, the slight parching of the skin at the corners of his eyes, Eve could distinguish no change that had taken place in his appearance during the past fifteen years.

As her father's friend, she had seen him more or less frequently; but not until Hugh Delevan had been dead some six months, and the chaos of his affairs had begun to resolve itself into an order that spelled poverty for Eve, had Brand Fielding become more than the most negligible factor in her scheme of things. Then, quietly, unobtrusively, he had insinuated himself into her life. With the precise, unfaltering calculation with which he did everything else, he had drawn back a curtain here, caused a lid to be lifted there, to afford her a summarizing glimpse of his enormous possessions and of the immense power he wielded. Deliberately he had kept himself, his own personality, in the background, "showing me the sugar coating first," Eve phrased it. Then, still with the same studied deliberation, he had begun to sketch himself into the picture.

Once he had referred to the difference between his age and Eve's, deprecating it, and, in the same breath, dismissing it as of no consequence. Eve agreed with him. The setulous training she had received during those fifteen years had not gone for nothing, and the roseate glow from those unnumbered millions would have reflected agreeably on an octogenarian, or created the pleasing illusion of five toes in a cloven hoof. Suppose that Brand Fielding were twenty or twenty-five years her senior and had committed all of the sins with which rumor duly accredited him. What difference did it make? One simply paid no attention

to gossip, and certainly disregarded anything that might be said about a man occupying a position such as that of Fielding. Anyhow, what did it matter? What did anything matter except that one should be able to live decently? By "decently" Eve meant in the way in which Hugh Delevan's daughter had been taught to regard as the only way. The orchid could not survive in the environment where the red geranium would flourish; one could not regard with equanimity even the mere possibility of such a transplanting.

The freshening wind, tinged with the breath of the frost, brushed Eve's bare shoulders with a chilly reminder that she had left her scarf hanging over the back of her chair in the living room. As she turned back to the doorway, she saw Fielding coming toward her, a fluffy cloak over his arm.

"You shouldn't be out here without a wrap, Eve," he admonished her. "These early fall nights are treacherous. Permit me." He held out the cloak and she slipped her arms into it. Instead of relinquishing his hold, he drew the folds close about her neck and snapped the silver clasp in place. Unconsciously, she shrank a little.

He smiled narrowly.

"You are chilled," he said. "I ought not to have allowed you to remain so long out here, but I did not realize where you had gone."

"I was thinking," Eve said briefly. "I'm quite ready to go in now."

"You've finished thinking, then?" he asked. "You've made up your mind? Because," he added, without giving her a chance to reply, "you *have* a mind, Eve. Unlike most beautiful women, you have an excellent brain. And you are beautiful, of course." His manner was as impersonal as if he were speaking of some one in whom neither of them had the slightest interest. "To the eye and ear, Eve, you are absolutely satisfying. I enjoy looking at

you, talking to you. You please me. I think I am not a conceited man; yet I suppose I have my little vanities; and one of them is my fixed conviction that I always know what I want. It seems to me that you also possess this characteristic. It is unusual in a woman, and it interested me to find it in you. You make up your mind what you want, and then you take the most direct method of getting it. That was what I meant when I asked you if you had finished thinking and had made up your mind. Do you—do you like the Circle D Ranch, Eve?"

"Yes; what I've seen of it." Eve matched her insolence with his. It was, she divined, the best way to deal with this man. His next words proved that she was correct.

"Yes," he said slowly, "you are quite selfish and self-seeking. In the pursuit of what you desire, you could be as ruthless as"—his level eyes were on hers—"as I myself. That interests me, too. A beautiful woman, with an alert, well-balanced mind and no soul whatever, is a wonderfully decorative thing. In the proper setting, you would be unequaled, my dear."

"That," said Eve, "is the second time recently that my possession of a soul has been questioned. But you can see for yourself that I am not really a feminine *Michael Scott*, or a reincarnation of *Waunemahee*," she said, and made a lazy little gesture at the shadow her figure cast on the flags beside her.

"*Waunemahee's* spirit fled in flame and would hardly come back in a being so different. Still, I am not certain that you are not a witch," Fielding told her with his cold smile. "They were not all ugly, you know. It has always seemed to me that beautiful women were the only ones who could cast really potent spells. Imagine being bewitched by a scrawny hag! I think I should like to show you the rest of the ranch, Eve." Again he looked at her with

that level gaze that held so much of critical appraisal.

"I should like to see it." Her eyes did not waver from his.

He bowed.

"It's a bargain then," he said; and the double meaning of his words was not lost on Eve. "To-morrow, perhaps, we shall make some plans. Shall we go back to the others now?" He cupped his hand under her arm as he guided her toward the lighted doorway.

Professor Stanton was asleep in his chair before the fire. His wife appeared to be engrossed in the contemplation of her own small, pink nails. From among the deep cushions where she was curled like a plump, contented cat, Claire Whitmore looked up, yawning frankly.

"Terrible place, this of yours, Mr. Fielding," she said. "I never was so sleepy in my life. I've done nothing but yawn since dinner. Even the professor's gone tight asleep."

"Fessy always goes to sleep early when he's planned something vastly exciting for the next day," Lucia observed. "He's quite made up his mind to climb to the top of that rock thing out there, Brand. He says he's going to-morrow morning, and wants to drag everybody with him. I"—her gaze went back again to her hands—"shall not go. I intend to sleep until noon."

"I'm afraid your husband won't go, either," Fielding said. "There's no path to the top of Council Rock. There used to be one, though. An Indian legend has it that, in the old days, the nine chiefs of the tribe used to hold their high councils there, but a landslide or something blocked the path, and now there's no way of getting up."

"More Indians?" yawned Claire. "What were they like, Mr. Fielding, the kind that had war dances and wore beads and scalped their prisoners?"

Fielding shook his head.

"I'm sorry, I know very little about

them, Mrs. Whitmore," he said. "I understand that their customs were rather unusual, however. There are still some traces of cliff dwellings to be found in Middlefinger Cañon, dwellings probably belonging to the tribe that used Council Rock. It's too bad one can't reach the summit of the peak; the view would be magnificent."

"Fessy will be so disgusted," murmured Lucia. "He wanted to take his little hammer and knock the top off that rock."

"No path? No way of getting up? Dear, dear, that's too bad!" The professor had opened his eyes and was blinking in solemn disappointment. "Is there no way at all, Mr. Fielding?"

"None, I'm afraid, professor."

"Never mind, Fessy." Lucia consoled him flippantly. "You shall go out and play in the cañon and ruin some perfectly good rocks there. It'll be just as much fun for you, and there'll be less chance of your breaking your neck."

The little slurring intonation in her voice made Eve a trifle indignant. It was bad enough for Lucia to have married the professor, without sneering at his harmless hobby. Eve felt sorry for the unfortunate little man, and, for a moment, she was tempted to speak up and tell Fielding that he was mistaken, that the path was still in existence. The words were at her lips, but she did not utter them. Somehow, she did not want Brand Fielding or any one else to know about the path. She and Peter had shared and kept the secret, imparted to them by an old Indian woman who had been known as "Granny," and who had claimed to be descended from the lost tribe of cliff dwellers.

No, Eve decided, she would not tell—not yet. Let them all go with the professor to Middlefinger Cañon, if they wanted to. She had a fancy to explore Council Rock by herself. It

was a sudden fancy and an inexplicable one. She did not even try to explain it, or why the prospect of indulging it should give her such an odd sensation of almost childlike glee.

When the party broke up for the night, Fielding detained her a moment at the foot of the stairs.

"The moon will be full the night after to-morrow," he said. "I think it might be rather agreeable if you and I were to sit out on the terrace together and watch it rise."

Eve understood what the suggestion meant. He would expect her answer then. Well, she was quite ready to give it. She nodded smilingly.

"Listen!" Fielding said. "Can you hear Sholokemis?"

Mingled with the smooth soughing of the wind among the spruce branches was a soft, rhythmic murmur, like the music of sweet-toned instruments afar off, blending in a clear, low harmony that sang of spring and youth and joyous growing things.

"Sholokemis," Eve repeated. "Sing-ing Water. Yes, I hear it."

The sound of it was still in her ears after she had fallen asleep, the haunting melody that was so strangely like a crooning song. "*Come, oh, come—come with me—come, oh, come,*" sang Sholokemis.

CHAPTER V.

In spite of her fatigue, in spite of the fact that the air had made her really drowsy, Eve's sleep was fitful and broken by fragmentary dreams. She rose early, bathed, and dressed before any one except the servants was stirring. The fancy of the night before was still upon her, only now it was something more than a mere whim; it was a determination, made strong by desire. To herself, she ridiculed it, called it absurd and schoolgirlish sen-

fimentality; but she did not alter her purpose.

Descending to the great dining room, she found, drawn up before the blazing hearth, a table set ready for breakfast. On the big buffet stood a coffee urn from which issued the sound of bubbling and an appetizing aroma. A row of copper chafing dishes steamed over slender saffron flames ascending from alcohol lamps. Eve helped herself to cereal, toast, coffee, and a portion of some delectable dish concocted of eggs and other ingredients, the exact identity of which was a mystery to her. She was really hungry, but she hurried through the meal, expecting to be interrupted by the advent of Fielding or some other member of the party. No one appeared, however, and when she had finished, she slipped through the hall and out to the veranda.

Out on the lawn before the terrace, a very small horse with a very large saddle was placidly cropping the grass. He looked as though he had never been introduced to a currycomb. His pale-brown hair was long and shaggy, almost woolly. The forelock that rested between his mild eyes was of extraordinary length and thickness. He was always kept saddled, "because some one might want to go somewhere," and his name was T. N. T., "just because he ain't," Fielding had explained, with one of his rare flashes of humor.

T. N. T. came at Eve's low call. It was a matter of only a few minutes' ride to the paddock, where a lantern-jawed cowman, in chaps and sombrero, speedily saddled a chestnut mare for Eve.

"She be the one Mr. Fielding said ye was to hev, an', accordin', here ye be," he said, leading the beast to the gate.

Eve did not wait for his assistance, but sprang into the saddle with a word and a smile of thanks.

It was a glorious morning. The sun, not more than an hour above the hori-

zon, poised like a golden globe in a sky of cloudless blue. The smoky haze of autumn had not yet begun to gather; the air was crystalline, crisp, and invigorating as a heady tonic. Eve filled her lungs with it, drawing it in with great, deep breaths. It set her blood tingling, banishing the tormenting disquiet, the leaden sense of oppression that had lain so heavily upon her, and filling her with a reckless gayety.

Topping a rise, she checked the mare for a moment and glanced over her shoulder. T. N. T. had returned to his customary station before the house; the figure of a white-capped maid was just vanishing around the corner of the veranda; but no other living thing was in sight. With a smile of satisfaction that her absence was as yet undiscovered, Eve again urged the mare into a canter.

One of the oat fields, by reason of its shape, was known as the Silver Bowl. Just beyond this, Eve turned at right angles across the brown-and-green stubble. Council Rock loomed ahead, its sides gashed with fissures and dotted with trees and undergrowth that found a tenuous hold on the steep slope. The base of the rock was hidden by a mass of splintered stone, broken off from the rock itself and piled up in rough, jagged heaps. Here, the mare could find no safe foothold, and, dismounting, Eve hooked the reins over the saddle horn and left the animal to graze. Then she began the climb.

For perhaps sixty feet, the ascent was gradual. Eve picked her way over or around boulders and pockets of loose rock, dodging the low branches of the trees that seemed to be endowed almost with malice, so persistently did they catch at her hair and garments. Sharp stones cut and gashed the stout leather of her riding boots, and once she saved herself from a painful fall by flinging both arms around the slender trunk of an aspen.

At the spot where a shafted tongue of rock pointed impudently skyward, she turned to the right and followed a narrow ledge that brought up abruptly in front of an immense red boulder. It was the crashing down of this boulder, uncounted years before, that had blocked the path to the summit. Some fifty feet it rose in the air, its top tilted back against the main body of rock, its wide base, buried in thick undergrowth, overhanging the valley below. It seemed like a complacent sentinel, squatted fatly across the path to wave all comers away. But, without hesitating, Eve plunged into the matted undergrowth, lifted a tangled screen of branches, and, on hands and knees, crawled through a short, shallow depression where the path dipped under the boulder.

There was only a moment before she could stand upright again, between the red boulder and the rock itself, in the face of which rude steps were cut. Creepers and running vines festooned themselves in twisted loops over the sides; small, stunted shrubs crouched in the crevices; a dry, brownish moss growth spread thinly over the stones. The place was filled with a ghostly twilight. Sheltered and shut in on all sides, it was absolutely still, silent with the strange, dead silence of long-deserted places. There were no birds, no lizards or creeping things; there were no insects. Even the vegetation seemed only half alive.

Eve set her feet in the steep, shallow steps and climbed upward toward the glimmer of light that filtered down from above. Some twenty feet of the ascent brought her into full daylight again, and now the path, winding upward through a natural crevice in the rock, was easier to follow. Nevertheless, it was precipitous enough, and Eve found herself breathing hard when at last she reached its end and stepped forth on the tree-studded little plateau

that formed the summit of Council Rock.

A cup-shaped depression, almost in the exact center of the plateau, was surrounded by nine huge spruces; and toward these, Eve went immediately. There should be, Eve thought, a flat-topped boulder, circled by nine smaller flat-topped boulders, one at the foot of each of the spruces. Strange how vividly the picture came back to her mind!

There they were, exactly as on the last day she and the boy Peter had played here together! The nine chiefs who had gathered in solemn council had long since gone to the happy hunting grounds, but the rocks that had been witness to many a sacred tribal rite, remained unchanged and unchanging.

For a moment, Eve stood looking down at the familiar scene. Then, with sparkling eyes, she hurried across the open space, stepped between two of the smaller stone seats, and sprang lightly upon the great central rock. At one side of it, a small cone-shaped heap of stones was piled.

"It's there!" Eve cried aloud. "It's still there!" Instinctively avoiding the middle of the rock—she remembered how, as children, neither she nor Peter would ever step upon that space—she crossed to the piled-up pyramid and began tearing it down. At the very bottom was a hard-packed mound of soil, from which she presently unearthed a flat band of some heavy, dull metal, inscribed with rude characters, an armlet, to judge from its appearance. With her riding gauntlet, Eve brushed the caked dirt from it, and stood for some time gazing down at it as it lay in her palm, a meditative line drawn between her brows.

Then, impulsively, she turned on her heel and ran up the slope to the edge of the plateau. There was an odd little smile on her lips, a flush of excitement

in her cheeks. She slipped the riding quirt from her wrist and flung it to the ground; her gloves and hat followed. Her straight black hair, ruffled by the wind and the exertion of her climb, had slipped in a great loose knot to the nape of her neck. Standing there, facing the spruce-grown slopes that towered to the south, her slim body in its close-fitting habit outlined against the sky, she looked very innocent, very girlish, not at all like the sophisticated young woman who, but a few hours before, had set her cynical insolence against Brand Fielding's and arranged to barter her youth and beauty for his millions. Her right hand was outflung before her; her left, its wrist clasped by the metal band, rose slowly into the air straight above her head.

She leaned forward, ever so slightly.

"Okkawala, Sholokemis!" High and true and sweet the call rang out, the long-forgotten signal with which the legendary Indian princess had been wont to summon her lover. The rocks caught it and flung it back a thousand broken, mocking echoes. And then, out of the silence, clarion-clear, there came an answer!

"*Wauemahee, Okkawala!*"

The blood left her cheeks; her arm dropped to her side. Startled, almost terrified, she wheeled about, her eyes searching the underbrush in the direction from which the sound had come. It couldn't be possible, it couldn't be! And yet there was no one else who knew either the call or its answer; no one else save old "Granny," the aged Indian squaw who had explained the meaning of the words, at the same time that she had revealed the secret of the lost path, and Granny's voice was shrill and cracked. But it couldn't be possible, after all these years that—

There was a crashing in the thickets, a violent swaying of low branches. Eve's white lips soundlessly formed a name.

CHAPTER VI.

It took Eve a moment to recover her composure. Then, with a smile that she strove vainly to make nonchalant, she gave her fingers to Ned Thornton's clasp.

"Peter!" she said, and her voice sounded oddly tremulous for the voice of Eve Delevan. "Peter! Why didn't you tell me? And how did you get here? Why, I left you in New York!"

"You left Ned Thornton in New York," he corrected. "Peter, you left at the far bend of the road yonder," he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the distant railroad, "years and years ago. Probably they're both still waiting for you to come back."

"Then you are——"

"Singing Water," he told her gravely. "You called to me, oh, princess, and I am here. Sholokemis heard the summons of Waunemahee. Winnekeeché, the great sun god, flashed to him a ray of light from *Manda-lue-nawa*, and he obeyed. And do you mean to tell me," he broke off in some excitement to demand, "that you found the golden link exactly where we buried it?"

She nodded.

"Exactly. Some of the stones had fallen from the pile, probably washed or blown down in a storm, but the link was quite safe. I thought of it the minute I got up here and ran to look."

"Oh, come and show me!" he exclaimed boyishly; and she led the way back to the circle of rocks. Disdaining his assistance, she sprang upon the great central stone. Thornton followed.

"Oh!" she cried involuntarily, as, moving beside her, he tramped toward its middle.

He stopped.

"What is it?"

"Why, nothing—only haven't you forgotten?" She was confused, a little

ashamed. "We never walked there, you know," she concluded lamely.

Thornton stepped to one side.

"I remember," he said. "That was where they tied Wind-of-the-Mountain to the stake and burned her alive, wasn't it? And Granny told us we must always walk around the spot. Poor old Granny! I wonder where she is now!"

"Give her the benefit of the doubt," Eve counseled. "She's been dead for years, of course. She was a funny old thing, wasn't she? Here's the cache, Peter." The name fell quite naturally from her lips. "Fancy no one's finding it in all this time!"

"Don't believe a soul's been up the path since our last afternoon here," he said. "Everybody thought the red pinnacle rock had blocked the trail; every one but Granny, that is, and she wouldn't have come here on a bet. There were too many departed spirits to suit her. By Jingo! I believe that's the very same little old knife I used when I was masquerading as Sholokemis!" He stooped and picked up a bit of rusted, corroded steel from which the wooden handle had rotted away. "Can you beat it?" he demanded. And Eve echoed, "Can you beat it?"

With deep interest, they examined the relic; and then, with one accord, they turned to explore the plateau, exclaiming delightedly over each familiar landmark. They were like two children, utterly unconscious of self in their rapt interest and enthusiasm. Almost every sentence began with: "Do you remember" or "Have you forgotten," and one never failed to be able to complete the reminiscence of the other.

It was not until they had returned to the glade near the head of the trail that the appearance of the shadows warned Eve of the passage of time. The sun had passed the zenith, and a glance at her wrist watch showed her

that it was well after noon. She had sunk down on a rock under a giant pine tree, and Thornton had flung himself full length at her feet. Her eyes dwelt on him approvingly, and in her glance there was also something of the presence of which she was not in the least aware.

He was good to look at, was Thornton, broad shouldered, deep chested, with the slim waist and narrow hips of the athlete. His face was rather lean, and his skin healthily tanned to a clear brown. If there was an almost feminine tenderness in the curve of his mouth, it was more than balanced by the square set of his strong jaw, and the firm line of the lips. The sunlight picked out threads of red in his close-cropped, dark hair.

"Why did you come, Ned?" Eve asked abruptly. "And why did you never tell me you were Peter? You knew me, didn't you?"

"Of course." He sat up and fumbled in his pocket for matches and his cigarette case. "I knew you the first time I saw you in New York, and naturally, I knew who you were long before that. Even the provincial West knew of Hugh Delevan's daughter. As for the other question, I came out here because—well, I told you that you hadn't seen the last of me, didn't I? I made up my mind——"

"But why did you never tell me you were Peter?" Eve interrupted hastily. She had not meant to give him that opening.

"Well, I didn't believe you'd be interested. Two or three times, I started to lead up to it, but you seemed to prefer not to talk about the West, and I thought it better not to insist. And, for another thing, I—well, I rather wanted you to remember without any prompting from me. I suppose," he said, smiling in a boyishly charming manner, "my vanity was wounded that you should have blotted me from your

memory altogether. You had seemed to be rather fond of me in the old days; you promised to come back to me, you know, in spite of forty fathers—I think that was the number you mentioned—and I wasn't flattered to discover that you had so completely forgotten my existence."

"I hadn't forgotten it," she contradicted him, "but how was I to know you were you? You were so frightfully grown up. Peter—I never knew any other name—and Edward aren't enormously similar. Thornton meant nothing to me; I doubt if I ever thought of the boy Peter by his family name. What made you adopt an alias, Ned? Or was Peter a nickname?"

"It wasn't, but it pointed the way to one," he explained. "My full name happens to be Peter Edward Thornton, but I dropped the Peter altogether in prep school, because the fellows combined the three initials and called me Pet. I didn't mind *your* doing it but——"

"You didn't?" she interrupted scornfully. "I fail to see how you could have objected much more strenuously unless you had dragged out a handful of my hair, as you once threatened. That was a *nice* thing to say to a girl, wasn't it?"

"Just as nice as for you to say you'd order me put to death by the nine tortures they practiced on Sholokemis," he retorted. "Why, you even collected a bottleful of stinging ants, and then, when one got loose and stung you, you swore."

"Oh!" said Eve.

"Swore you wouldn't let them hurt me," he amended gallantly; and they both laughed together. "You were a bully pal," he said, sobering. "I've never known any one of either sex who could be as fine as you were. After you went away, I used to watch the road by the hour, expecting to see you appear any minute. I hadn't the slightest doubt that you'd come back to me, and that everything would come out

just as we'd planned so often. And then I went away to school and college and to Paris; and when I found you in New York last year, you were—well, different." There was a little note of wistfulness in his voice. "You were no longer Wind-of-the-Mountain, and you had forgotten all about Singing Water and the golden link that bound you to him."

"Don't!" said Eve sharply.

"Do you remember the day I found it?" he said. "It was buried in a mound of earth at the foot of the big, dead spruce that used to stand just beyond the circle of rocks. I dug it up, and we cleaned off the dirt with grass and leaves, and then I put it on your arm. I wanted to show it to Granny, but you wouldn't let me. You said she'd probably steal it. We were sure it was the *Manda-lue-nawa* that Sholokemis gave Waunemahee in the legend, and so it must be pure gold and valuable. And so we kept it a secret, and never let any one know about it. It was ours, just yours and mine, as the path was. We knew it was all very wonderful, to have an Indian legend and a secret path and a golden link. Oh, Eve, my dear, how young we were, how foolishly, beautifully young!"

She nodded dreamily. Her eyes were very bright and there was in them a strange, soft light that would have amazed and puzzled those who knew her.

"Waunemahee went away," the young man went on. "Wind-of-the-Mountain left her lover, Singing Water, and he was desolate. He sought her, and when, at length, he found her, lo! it was not she. But now she has come back to Sholokemis after all the years, and they have found the golden link that was lost, the link that will bind them together forever. Eve—"

"I must go!" She rose abruptly, avoiding his eyes. "I've stayed an unconscionable time and shall be fright-

fully unpopular with my host." With elaborate care, she adjusted the loosened hairpins in the rebellious coils of her hair, picked up her hat and gauntlets and, with her quirt, slapped at her riding skirt to free it from dust. "You are staying at the hotel in town, I presume?" she inquired, once more encased in her shell of aloof reserve.

"No. Mr. Fielding was good enough to ask me to be his guest at the Circle D." He was watching her steadily. "I arrived a few hours ahead of time and took the opportunity to visit the rock."

"Ah! How interesting!" Eve's tone expressed nothing so much as polite indifference; one would have guessed that she yawned mentally. "Have you ever noticed the paneling in the living room at the ranch? It's really quite extraordinary. I understand that they obtained that wonderful effect by polishing the spruce boards with hot irons." She turned toward the path.

"I've never seen the ranch house," Thornton answered shortly. "Even you can't go like this!" and then, as she merely looked at him with expressionless eyes, he took a quick step toward her, his own eyes pleading and wistful.

"Eve, you'll give me one more day with you before you pledge yourself to Fielding?" he begged. "Say you will. It can't make any difference to you, and it means so much to me."

She arched her brows.

"Really, Ned—"

"Please! Promise me! Just one day with you. We'll spend it up here, where we've had such splendid times together. I'd like to remember—"

"Remember me as I was fifteen years ago? Is that what you mean?" Her laugh was not quite pleasant. "But I'm afraid, Ned—"

"You haven't said yes to him yet, have you?" he asked sharply.

"No."

"Then promise me, Eve."

She hesitated, tapping her boots with the handle of her quirt. Then, with a shrug, she yielded.

"Very well," she said carelessly. "I promise. But it will have to be soon, probably to-morrow." She launched the shaft dexterously, and saw him wince as the meaning of her words struck home. But he made no reply except a quiet, "Thank you. We can start directly after luncheon, if that is agreeable to you."

He made no attempt to talk to her as they took their way down the steep path, and at the base of the rock, she dismissed him. She had been away from the ranch a long time, she said, and Mr. Fielding would be wondering what had become of her. As she rode away, she looked back once, and waved a gauntleted hand.

"*Oom-wa, Sholokemis!*" she called. Her voice was clear and gay. But as she turned the mare's head in the direction of the ranch, she sighed. Then she took herself sharply to task for being sentimental. In her heart, she had said good-by years ago to Sholokemis and all that he stood for. Why should she sigh because she said it now with her lips?

"I had no business to make that silly promise," she told herself. "I'll not keep it."

But she knew perfectly well that she would.

CHAPTER VII.

Even the best of women like to play with fire. They thrill to the excitement and danger of it, and assuage their fears, or, perchance, salve their consciences, with the pleasing sophistry that the excitement is innocent and harmless because there is no danger. Eve Delevan had every intention of marrying Brand Fielding. She was prepared to answer in the affirmative when he should ask her to become his

wife. She meant to do nothing that could, in any way, jeopardize her position. She admitted no love for Thornton and refused to recognize the possibility that it might exist. The fact that he and Peter, the playmate of her childhood, had turned out to be one and the same, in no whit altered the case or put a different complexion on it, except that it was pleasant to talk over with him old times. And there was, she assured herself, not the slightest harm in that, not the slightest danger.

She made no secret of the unexpected meeting, although she did not mention that it had occurred on Council Rock. Indeed, she was the first to speak of it, casually, indifferently, as something that had proved mildly diverting, yet of no moment.

"It was quite astonishing, you know," she confided to Fielding over the dinner table. "Having left Ned in New York, I was hardly prepared to have him pop out of the bushes, for all the world like a white rabbit from a conjuror's hat. I was really startled."

"It seems to have taken you quite some time to recover from it," put in Lucia Stanton with acid sweetness. Mrs. Stanton was admittedly cross. It appeared that the professor had misunderstood her avowed intention of remaining at home, and had wakened her, as she phrased it, "in the middle of the night," to attend the expedition to Middlefinger Cañon, an expedition which, owing to the absence of Eve, had not been undertaken. Fielding had explained to Eve that they wanted her to go with them and so had decided to wait until the following day. "We thought you had got lost or been kidnapped, and were just on the point of sending out a search party, when you turned up," Lucia added. "It must be quite madly exciting to be so startled that one misses one's luncheon."

Eve surveyed her with cool disdain, but made no reply; and Claire Whit-

more, as usual, anxious to prevent hostilities, nervously amended:

"Lucia means that you must have found it really pleasant to meet Mr. Thornton so unexpectedly, Eve."

"Thank you so much for the translation, Claire," Eve said. "I *did* find it pleasant, and I enjoyed my day very much." But her eyes were unsmiling and her lips were hard, as she glanced down the table toward Thornton's place. He was sitting between Mrs. Stanton and Claire, and he had hardly taken his eyes from Eve's face all during dinner. She was looking unusually well, as Lucia had already and superfluously informed him.

The diffused yellow light, given out by numberless candles that burned in great brass sconces on the walls, softened her beauty, robbed her face of some of its cold austerity. Her black gown, severely simple in cut, accentuated the white perfection of her arms and shoulders. She had never appeared to better advantage, nor, Thornton thought bitterly, been more serenely, aloofly sure of herself. The smile she gave him, as he stood aside to allow her to precede him from the dining room, was as brilliant as the glitter of sun on ice, and as cold.

In the living room, he would have taken the chair at her side, but Fielding had already established himself there, and perforce he took a seat on the other side of the hearth, where Lucia Stanton was prodding the somnolent professor with shafts of silken sarcasm.

"Mayn't we have the lights out, Mr. Fielding?" Claire wanted to know. "The glow from the fire is so lovely." If the truth must be told, Mrs. Whitmore was longing for a little doze and was hoping that, with the lamps extinguished, she would be able to take forty winks unobserved.

"Certainly," Fielding agreed, and, rising, touched the switch.

"Ah, that's better! Thanks." With a sigh of satisfaction, Claire settled herself among the cushions of her chair. "Now if you'd only tell some nice, creepy ghost stories, Mr. Fielding—the kind that make cold shivers run up and down one's spine—it would be wonderful."

"I couldn't tell a ghost story to save my life," Fielding spoke over his shoulder from the doorway in which stood one of the maids, "but I can produce a perfectly good witch, if that will help any. There's a woman outside who wants to tell the ladies' fortunes."

"Oh, have her in, do," Lucia said languidly. "Maybe she'll tell Fessy something that will wake him up."

"She's really rather wonderful, I'm told," Fielding remarked when the maid had been dispatched to fetch the woman. "She reads palms and goes through the usual tricks, of course; but she has a somewhat novel method, too. She takes something belonging to some one, any personal possession, but preferably some article that has been worn, and by it, describes the character and appearance of the owner, and the facts of his life."

"Fancy!" murmured Lucia, while Claire repressed a yawn and Thornton tried to look politely interested.

"Suppose," proposed the professor, who had brightened in childlike anticipation at the suggestion of the entertainment, "that you collect some article from each of the ladies, Mr. Fielding, and hand them to her one by one——"

"The ladies, Fessy?" interrupted Lucia.

"So that she cannot possibly know whom she is describing," the professor continued, apparently without noticing his wife's flippancy. "That would be interesting, don't you think so, Miss Delevan?"

"Very," Eve said.

"A good idea," applauded Fielding.

"If you'll let me have your handkerchief, Mrs. Stanton—or anything at all will do."

Lucia produced the handkerchief, Claire Whitmore a jeweled hair ornament. Fielding glanced with some interest at Eve's contribution.

"That's an odd bracelet, Eve," he said. "Have I ever seen it before?"

Eve shrugged her shoulders slightly. "I don't know, I'm sure," she said. "I haven't worn it in some time." Which statement was truthful, if misleading.

The professor bent forward eagerly. "Why, that looks to me like—" he began, and then stopped as a maid, tight-lipped and disapproving, ushered the fortune teller into the room.

"Oh! she's an Indian!" Claire said delightedly. "A real Indian, Eve! Isn't it exciting?"

Eve made no reply. In amazement and incredulity, she was staring at the woman. There could be no doubt about it; it was Granny, whom she had supposed long dead. Instinctively, she pushed back her chair, so that it lay well outside the lighted space.

But Granny did not even glance in her direction. With eyes downcast, the old Indian woman shambled across the polished floor and squatted on her heels on the rug in front of the fire.

A frayed and shabby brown skirt of ancient cut was partially concealed by an incredibly dirty blanket that wrapped her head and shoulders and was clutched together under her fleshless chin. No thread of gray showed in the few strands of coarse black hair that escaped in wisps from the enveloping folds of cloth. Her feet were thrust into worn moccasins. Her back was bowed and bent, the stooped shoulders rounding convexly above the flat breast. Her eyes, set close together and deep-sunken in the sockets, were veiled by yellow, seamy lids. They had the lusterless black of charred wood. There was no life in them. The iris seemed a

part of the pupil, the whole a mere dull jet bead. Over the high, ugly cheek bones of the color of a dead leaf, the skin was drawn tightly, withering into a labyrinth of lines and wrinkles in the hollow cheeks and under the eye sockets. She was unbelievably old. One wondered at the miracle that kept the blood flowing through the shrunken veins.

And yet there was a sort of stateliness about her, a quiet, self-possessed dignity that made one overlook her rags and dirt and squalor. They seemed not really to belong to her, but to be mere inconsequential trifles in which she had no part.

"She must be at least a hundred years old!" observed Lucia, with cool impersonality.

The dull eyes turned; the lips mumbled soundlessly over the toothless gums.

"At least a hundred years old," repeated Lucia, "aren't you? Just fancy! And you're going to tell our fortunes? I'm so interested!"

"Lie," said Granny calmly. "Not interested. Don't give a damn. I know. This yours." Her skinny hand fumbled in the little heap of articles Fielding had silently put on the rug beside her, and she held up Lucia's dainty handkerchief. "You fake!" she grunted. "All time fake. Foolish? Well, why not? Leave good maize out, crows eat it, spoil it. *He* knows—that's all right." She sniffed suspiciously at the handkerchief, grunted again, and thrust the bit of linen under her blanket. "You not want," she announced placidly. "Me touch—you not want. I know."

She was evidently through with Lucia; and Claire's hair ornament evoked an even more brief notice, being dismissed with: "Fool! Husband no good! Not waste time—not worth it. Not love you—not ever. Have good time—forget him. Trash!"

"Oh!" said Claire weakly. "Won't he ever come back?"

Granny's head wagged from side to side.

"Like panther, not pussy cat. You not care now. Only think so." She flipped the hair ornament aside and her clawlike fingers closed over the gold armlet.

"Oush!" she ejaculated. "Where you get?" she demanded suddenly of Fielding.

"That belongs to one of the party," he informed her.

"No!" she declared emphatically. "No!"

Fielding leaned over the back of Eve's chair.

"She says it doesn't belong to you. You haven't been committing larceny, have you, Eve? What does it tell you, Granny?" he added aloud. And then, to Eve: "Queer old thing, isn't she? Watch her now."

A curious change had come over the Indian woman. Her dull eyes were bright and sparkling; the stoop was gone from her shoulders. She still squatted on her heels, one hand holding the folds of the blanket under her chin, but a sort of keen vitality seemed to animate her whole body. She was swaying back and forth, back and forth, with slow, rhythmic regularity, moving her head a little from side to side, with the bony fingers of her right hand stroking the armlet which lay on the rug before her.

It was very still in the room. The flames leaped high from the huge logs in the hearth, setting grotesque shadows to dancing on the polished spruce walls that gleamed in the half light like tarnished silver. Great antlered heads loomed out of the gloom; the eyes of the crouching lynx in the corner gleamed greenly, as if the animal were poised for a savage spring. The long-drawn, mournful hoot of an owl some-

where without seemed to send a shudder through the air.

All at once, the seamy, yellow lids drooped over the eyes of the Indian woman. She began to speak.

CHAPTER VIII.

"*Who has looked on Waunemahee, she the fairest of the daughters of the mighty seventh chieftain—who has looked and has not loved her?*" The cracked, treble voice had sunk to a low crooning, slurred and guttural, yet not unpleasant. The phrases came monotonously, with a sort of rhythmic beat, as if the crone were repeating a form of crude verse committed to memory. "Black her hair as is the crow's wing, black and long as tails of ponies. Bright her eyes as little pebbles where the sun god, Winnekeche, strikes them with his fire arrows. She is slim and swift and sudden as the doe that flees the hunter; cool and sweet as is the west wind when it rises at the bidding of the dark god, Kooromeha.

"Who has looked on Waunemahee, she the fairest of the daughters of the mighty seventh chieftain. Who has looked and has not loved her?" So of her sang Sholokemis, sweet of voice and young and agile, poor in blankets, poor in ponies, could not buy her from her father—so he sang to Waunemahee, told her of his love in singing. He had nothing but his singing, nothing but his youth, his brown arms, strong and hungry for her clasp. Looked she long on Sholokemis, poor in ponies, poor in blankets, could not buy her from her father; looked she long, and long she listened to the voice of Sholokemis, singing of his love and longing.

"When the dark god, Kooromeha, drove the sun god from the sky path, then she called to Sholokemis, called him loudly, called him surely.

"Okkawala, Sholokemis." So he searched for her and found her, so he

sang his love, and, singing, touched her right foot with his right foot, touched her left foot with his left foot, touched her fingers with his fingers, every finger to its fellow, in the rite of high betrothal. So was he to Waunemahee, so was she to Sholokemis, poor in blankets, poor in ponies, could not buy her from her father. So was she for Sholokemis, his alone, not any other's, by the high rite of betrothal. Made he then a shining token, beat it smooth and round and hollow, called it *Manda-lue-nawa*, put it on her arm for binding her to him, she his for always, his alone, not any other's. So they loved for long in secret. Sholokemis, poor in blankets, poor in land, and poor in ponies, could not buy her from her father. He must hunt for pelts of beaver, pelts of fox and mink and otter, hunt for stones, to string together, many stones, all bright and shining, so to buy her from her father.

"Come there then the mighty chieftain, he whose shining eagle feathers won nine shadows from the sun god, offered to the seventh chieftain, many blankets, many ponies, many skins of fox and beaver as the price of Waunemahee. Knew he not of Sholokemis. He was old and full of wisdom, rich in blankets, rich in ponies. He, of all the nine the greatest, cast his eyes on Waunemahee, wanted her, and bade her father, seventh of the nine great chieftains, bring her to the sacred council, there her left foot to his left foot, and her right foot to his right foot, all her fingers to his fingers, every finger to its fellow, there to make her his, no other's, in the rite of high betrothal.

"Spoke the mighty seventh chieftain to his daughter, Waunemahee, spoke of all the land and ponies, pelts, and blankets of the great chief, he of all the nine the greatest. Waunemahee listened, pondered."

The low, monotonous voice ceased for an instant. Thornton stirred un-

easily in his chair, his eyes vainly trying to pierce the strip of darkness that lay between him and Eve. Her figure was a mere darker blur in the shadows, but he could see that she was bending forward, tense, absorbed. The professor and Fielding had not moved. Lucia, leaning back in her chair, was shielding her eyes with one hand. Claire's face was averted.

"Waunemahee listened, pondered," the crooning chant began again.

"There were very many blankets, many ponies, skins of mink and fox and beaver. He, the mighty, he, the great chief, he, the greatest of the nine chiefs. Waunemahee listened, pondered. Then she knelt before her father, touched his feet with all her fingers, laid her head upon her fingers, in a sign that she was ready. Threw she *Manda-lue-nawa* in a stone heap in the pinewood.

"When the dark god, Kooromeha, drove the sun god from the sky path, sat the nine in solemn council, all the nine chiefs, all the great chiefs, on the nine rocks, round the great rock, where they burned the sacred fire. Sat they there in solemn council, waited there for Waunemahee. Came she when the moon god, risen high above the tree-tops, battled with the dark god, Kooromeha. Came she; and the mighty chieftain, he of all the nine the greatest, rose in anger, rose and thundered.

"*Manda-lue-nawa*," cried he, 'link of both our souls together, in the rite of high betrothal! We have found it in the pinewood. Tell us, Waunemahee, daughter of my seventh chieftain, tell us what is this that shows betrothal of the singer, Sholokemis, to the maid that I have chosen? Is it so you love and linger when the dark god, Kooromeha, drives the sun god from the sky path? Is it so you stood together? Or does Sholokemis perish by the tortures of the council, by the sticks of fire, the rawhide, by the stinging ants, and

others of the tortures of the nine chiefs? Speak and answer, Waunemahee!

"Then spoke Waunemahee, mindful of the very many blankets, of the ponies, and the wide lands of the great chief of the council. Then she spoke, and then she answered:

" 'Lies has Sholokemis pictured, lies, oh, chief! He looked above him, at the maid whom you have chosen, looked too high at Waunemahee.' Thus she spoke and thus she answered.

"Then the great chief gave his orders, and they brought him Sholokemis, he who sang to Waunemahee, he who sang to her and loved her, hunted far for skins and peltry, so to buy her from her father.

" 'You have sinned, oh, Sholokemis,' spoke the great chief in his anger. 'Yours the greatest of all sinning. You have lied about a maiden, far above you, Waunemahee, daughter of my seventh chieftain. *Manda-lue-wona* dooms you to the tortures of the council, to the nine and sacred tortures.'

"Sholokemis stood there, silent. Could he plead with Waunemahee, she to whom he sang his love song? She had lied, and for such sinning, hers the tortures of the nine chiefs. Could he plead with Waunemahee, give her over to the tortures? So he looked at Waunemahee. So she looked at Sholokemis. She was mindful of the ponies, of the wide lands and the blankets. So she looked at Sholokemis, looked—and spurned the love she bore him. So they brought him to the torture.

"Through the sky path rode the sun god, Winnekeeché, and before him fled the dark god, Kooromeha. Sat the nine chiefs at the tortures. By the little sticks of fire, by the stinging ants and others of the tortures, nine in number, so was Sholokemis tortured, Sholokemis, silent, bleeding, watching ever Waunemahee, she to whom he sang

his love song, she who watched his pain, and spoke not."

Eve drew a long, shuddering breath. Silent, motionless, she sat there in her chair, her body rigid, her fascinated eyes staring fixedly at the old woman who still swayed back and forth, back and forth. The slow recitative went on:

"Then they came to the last torture, to the torture of the rawhide, to the worst of all the tortures. Round his neck they drew the cord tight, round the neck of Sholokemis, wet and tight they drew the rawhide. High the sun god rode the sky path, swift the flight of blazing arrows that he showered on the rawhide round the neck of Sholokemis. And the rawhide, dried and shriveled, round the neck of Sholokemis growing tighter, ever tighter, till his eyes were balls of fire, watching ever Waunemahee, she to whom he sang his love song, she who pledged her his forever, she who sold her soul for blankets, heaps of skins, and many ponies, she who watched him die and spoke not. So died Sholokemis, silent.

"But the sun god, Winnekeeché, full of wrath at Waunemahee, stole her shadow as she sat there, looking down on Sholokemis, stole her shadow, showed her sinning, showed her for a witch and wanton; she, who pledged to Sholokemis by the high rite of betrothal, his to be and not another's, sold her soul away for blankets, heaps of skins, and many ponies.

"Then the seventh chieftain, father of the soulless Waunemahee, shut his eyes and scattered ashes on his head and on his blanket, hid his face the while they bound her, hand and foot against the high stake in the center of the great rock. There they burned her, burned her living, flung her ashes to the four winds, cursed her name, and left her spirit, naked, homeless, so to wander through the mountains, ever seeking for the soul of Sholokemis. '*Okkawala*,

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Sholokemis. 'Listen, you can hear her calling, asking that her love forgive her, asking that he take her, keep her, begging him to grant her pardon. Seek no fate like Waunemahee's, keep your soul, nor spurn your lover for wide lands and many ponies, blankets, beads, and heaps of peltry! Listen—you can hear her calling!'

Without the slightest warning the old woman suddenly sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing wide, her voice shrill and high, one skinny hand outstretched, the long forefinger pointing straight at Eve. Claire uttered a stifled scream, and, at the same instant, the great log on the hearth split in twain and collapsed in a shower of sparks, plunging the room in almost total darkness. Outside, the rising wind swept through the spruce branches with a sound that was like a wail.

With an exclamation of annoyance, Fielding moved quickly to the electric switch; the lights flared up brightly. But the rug before the fire was empty. The Indian woman had disappeared.

"Ugh!" Claire exclaimed with a shiver of disgust. "How she scared me!"

"And what an abominable story!" Lucia added. "Do you call *that* telling fortunes, Mr. Fielding? Of all the weird and impossible nonsense!"

"Most interesting," declared the professor emphatically. "I'm sorry to disagree with you, my dear, but I think the story vastly enlightening and instructive. I am more than ever sorry that we cannot visit the top of Council Rock, the site, presumably, of the scenes the woman described. And her manner of telling the tale—really remarkable! It was like a poem in blank verse, primitive, of course, and very faulty, but charming! Amazing how she learned it!"

"It seemed to me that she was asleep, or in a state of trance," Lucia offered. "I don't know how it struck the rest

of you, but, for my part, I'll never be convinced that that dirty, ignorant, old thief—she deliberately stole my handkerchief, you know—knew enough to recite those lines."

"It *does* seem odd," Fielding conceded, and the professor murmured something about things in 'heaven and earth, Horatio,' adding: "I'd like to see *Manda-lue-nawwa*, with your permission, Miss Delevan. There's a curious inscription on it, is there not? I had just a glimpse of it, and I should like to examine it more closely. I am familiar with some forms of Indian writing."

But the golden link was not to be found, nor was Claire's jeweled hair ornament. Both had vanished with Granny.

"I am so sorry, Mrs. Whitmore," Fielding apologized earnestly. "I wouldn't have had such a thing happen for the world. But don't worry; I'll have your pin back in an hour. Doubtless she regarded it as her perquisite. And your bracelet, too, Eve."

"Never mind," Eve said tonelessly. It was the first time she had spoken. "I don't want ever to see it again." She rose and went toward the door. "Good night," she murmured.

"Oh, but Eve——" Fielding was beginning.

"I'm tired. Good night."

Was it his fancy, Thornton wondered, or did she put out her hand to steady herself as she passed out the door?

"Listen!" quoted the professor. "You can hear her calling!"

The wailing moan of the wind was plainly audible, and mingling with it, the musical plash of the stream as it made its little leap into the stone basin of the fountain. But to Eve Delevan's strained senses, the water was no longer singing its melody of love, no longer rippling out its plaintive call; it was laughing, and in its laughter was a note of jeering irony that flung a mocking

challenge to the wind sobbing through the branches of the spruce, outside the window.

CHAPTER IX.

But when the morning sun gilded the mountain peaks and spread its broad beams over the wide fields, Eve laughed at herself. Was she still a child to be frightened by bogies, thrown into fits of hysterical weeping by an old Indian thief who was crafty enough to play on the arrant superstitions of a credulous audience? In all probability, Granny had learned of the presence of Hugh Delevan's daughter at the Circle D, and, cunning old trickstress that she was, had set her stage and planned her rôle for the purpose of producing precisely the effect that she had obtained.

Without question, she remembered the wild little girl to whom, years before, she had told many a tale of doubtful authenticity, and to whom she had confided her firm belief that some day the spirit of Princess Waunemahee would be sent back to earth, probably in the body of some dark-haired, dark-eyed, little girl, descended from the ancient tribe, to be given another chance. Granny was no fool. She had seen the opportunity to dramatize the legend, with financial benefit to herself, and she had seized upon it. The story itself, as chanted by Granny, was nothing new. Eve remembered it vaguely from her childhood. Some local poet had fitted it to the "Hiawatha" measure, and Granny had been clever enough to memorize that version.

"And you"—Eve mentally admonished her reflection in the mirror over her dressing table—"you let her do it! You let her trick you and fool you and make a spectacle of you before all these people! Eve Delevan, I'm ashamed of you!"

She dressed herself with especial care and, fresh and charming, de-

scended to the dining room where the rest of the party were already gathered.

"It's a positive crime, Fessy," Lucia was complaining, "to drag everybody out of bed at shriek of dawn to go and hunt for stupid old rocks. Don't you think you'd survive if you left 'em in peace?"

The professor smiled dreamily and helped himself to more kidney omelet. Eve slipped into her place between Fielding and Ned Thornton, to both of whom she tossed a gay greeting. Fielding replied in the same vein, but Thornton seemed quiet and preoccupied. Nor did he have much to say when, directly after the meal was over, the horses were brought round and they all started off. Luncheon was to be packed in hampers and sent after them.

"We can eat it anywhere we like, you know," Fielding said. "There are dozens of little streams, and we can picnic beside one of them. See how clearly their courses are marked out!"

Here and there along the sides of the mountains, their silver leaves transmuted by the first caress of the frost, twin ranks of aspens marched downward toward the valley, a glittering, golden host.

"The banks of the streams are bordered with them," Eve explained in answer to Claire's question. "In the early fall, you can trace a watercourse for miles, simply by looking for the aspen trees."

"You know a lot of things about this part of the country, don't you Eve?" Claire said. "It always amazes me, until I remember that you used to live here when you were little. You were fond of it, weren't you—the ranch, I mean?"

"Very!"

"Did Mr. Fielding know it?"

"I have no idea."

"Well, I'll wager he did!" Claire nodded her head sagaciously. "And that's why he wanted you to come out

here, so that you'd remember about it and want it back. He wanted to tempt you."

"Not a difficult matter," Eve remarked dryly.

"Oh, but you're not—I mean you won't—you're not really going to marry him, are you, Eve? It isn't right, it isn't right!" There was vehement earnestness in Claire's voice.

"No?"

"No, and you know it! Everybody knows it! Why, even that old Indian woman warned you!"

"Rubbish, Claire!"

"It's not rubbish! She knew what she was talking about. Didn't she put her finger on the very crux of the situation between Nate and me? He stopped loving me long ago. I'm too fat and easy-going for him. He likes what he calls 'pep.' And I don't really care for him any more, although I've pretended to myself that I did and made myself miserable trying to win him back when he didn't want to come and I didn't honestly want him. Oh, she was perfectly right! She told you——"

"A lot of rather picturesque nonsense with a dramatic finish, so that she could get a chance to steal your pin and my bracelet," Eve added coolly. "Don't be a little idiot, Claire! Perhaps she did happen to guess right about you, but it was nothing more than a guess."

"But she told Lucia——"

"Well, what did she tell Lucia?"

"I—why, she said—you know—about a fake and crows and good maize and that he knew. I don't remember any more."

"Very lucid, indeed," was Eve's comment. "Almost as clear as the way she put it. I couldn't see any sense to it at all. Could you—now, honestly, could you?"

"Well, not a great deal," Claire confessed weakly.

"Exactly! And there was quite as much to what she said afterward."

"But she certainly meant that you weren't to marry Fielding," Claire persisted. "You can't, Eve. You mustn't! You'd be selling your soul just as surely as that Indian girl, what's her name, did to the ninth chief, and for the same reason. She didn't love him and you don't love Brand Fielding. And there's Ned Thornton. He's mad about you, and I believe you——"

"If you have quite done romancing, Claire," Eve interrupted with dangerous calm, "I think I shall ride ahead."

She did not wait for Claire's protest, but touched the mare with her heel and galloped up to Lucia, who was engaged in her usual pastime of baiting her husband. Almost immediately, Ned Thornton joined them.

"You've not forgotten your promise?" he reminded Eve in a low tone. "I told Fielding that, after luncheon, you and I were riding on a little private expedition of our own."

"Yes? And what did he say?"

"He said to be sure to bring you back to the ranch in time for an early dinner, because he had an engagement with you for this evening. Is that what you meant yesterday when you told me to-day would be my last chance to be with you?"

For the second time, Eve touched the mare with her heel and galloped ahead, without answering the question. Everybody seemed determined to make her think, and she was quite as determined that she would not think. She had shut her decision away and sealed it up. No good could come of discussing it with any one. She had made up her mind and she was not going to change it. Of what use then, to dwell on alluringly beautiful impossibilities? She was a sane, reasoning woman. There was just one sane, reasonable course for her to follow, and follow it she would, with no sentimental back-

ward glance, no foolish longings, no vain regrets.

CHAPTER X.

Eve sat leaning back against the gnarled roots of a pine tree, growing on a wide ledge in Middlefinger Cañon, and examined appreciatively the clump of mountain mahogany that screened her cool and comfortable retreat. The low, gnarled branches were covered with small leaves that ran the gamut of color from red brown to a rich burnt orange. They seemed fairly to flame against the background of the gray rocks. Tier on tier above them massed the black spruces, and the ground was covered with the tiny cones and flat needles of the hemlocks.

It was a pleasant spot and Eve had chosen it with some care. The others had scattered here and there about the cañon, and she had dismissed both Fielding and Thornton, who showed a disposition to linger, announcing rather brusquely that she preferred to be alone for a little while.

From where she sat, she could see Lucia, comfortably ensconced on a flat rock some distance below, and the professor, who was scrambling along a narrow ledge that bordered the cliff side, and keeping up a running fire of comment, apparently addressed to himself, since he seemed to expect no answer to his observations. Occasionally, the staccato tap of his hammer rang out, and particles of stone rattled down. Evidently he was having a wonderful time.

"There's some sort of an opening here, darling," he presently called to Lucia. "It's probably an old cliff house. I shall climb up to see."

"Don't," said Lucia. "You'll fall down and we shall have to lug you home in sections."

"Oh, but I must! It's most interesting! I shall just take hold of this

little pine tree"—he suited the action to the word—"and pull myself up, and then——"

There was the sound of breaking branches, an exclamation from the professor, a scream from Lucia, a crash, and a rattling clatter of loosened stones and earth rolling down the face of the cliff.

Eve sprang to her feet in consternation, just in time to see the professor, his outstretched hands clutching futilely at the air, sway backward, graze a sharp rock, and fall headlong to the ground within a yard of where his wife had been sitting. In an instant, Lucia was kneeling beside him, supporting his shoulders and clasping his disheveled head to her breast.

"John!" Her voice was sharp with terror. "Are you hurt?"

The professor's head rolled over heavily against her arm; his eyes were closed, his arms dangled limply from the shoulders.

Eve had a glimpse of a white, fear-stricken face, as Lucia tore off her hat, and darted down the slope to where a little spring bubbled up among the rocks. Slipping and sliding, Eve made her way as rapidly as possible to the professor's side and bent over him, only, the next second, to be swept fiercely aside. Lucia did not speak; she seemed completely oblivious of Eve's presence.

"Oh, my dear, my dear, my dear!" She was murmuring over and over, as she alternately bathed his face with the cold water and frantically chafed his hands.

Stupefied amazement held Eve rooted where she stood. She was unable to believe the evidence of her senses. Was this Lucia Stanton, cynically contemptuous of and acutely bored with her ineffectual little husband this flame of a woman, in whose voice and eyes, in whose very gestures throbbed a love

and tenderness, fiercely protective, divinely passionate?

"Oh, John, dearest, John!" Her words poured out in a tumbled torrent, pleading, incoherent. "Open your eyes, dear—speak to me!"

The professor did open his eyes, blinking up like a bewildered little owl at the agonized face above him.

"Well, well!" he ejaculated weakly. "I fell, didn't I? Well, well!" He began gingerly to feel his limbs. "No bones broken, I fancy," he opined. "I must be all right. How very careless of me. I——"

Lucia promptly burst into tears.

"Oh, oh!" she sobbed, "you frightened me so! I thought you were killed and you'd never speak to me again."

"There, there, dear," he soothed her. "I'm so sorry! That pine tree pulled right out by the roots before I had any idea of what was happening. But I'm not hurt a bit. Poor darling, I wouldn't have distressed you for the world. There, there, don't cry, dear! Everything is all right and I'm just as good as new." He stroked her bowed head gently, talking to her as one might talk to a child, using foolish little terms of endearment.

Presently, Lucia's sobs ceased; she raised her head.

"You—you ridiculous old idiot!" she said tremulously. "I've a mind to spank you." But she didn't. She kissed him instead, and he held her close.

Eve went back to her pine root. A strange phrase was beating in her mind, recurring again and again with curious persistence. "*Leave good maize out, crows eat it—spoil it. He knows—that's all right.*"

So that was it! So Lucia Stanton preferred to hide her love under a cloak of tolerant indifference, concealing it as something too sacred and precious to be gazed at and speculated on by a morbidly curious world! To her husband, there was no sting in her seem-

ingly barbed words. Between them there was perfect sympathy and harmony. He understood, and nothing else mattered.

"You fake. All time fake," Granny had said. Yes, Lucia was a "fake;" but Eve thought, of rather a nice kind.

Some twenty minutes later, Eve sauntered down to the spot where the Stantons were sitting side by side. Lucia, her eyelids a little reddened, glanced up and waved her hand.

"Fessy's just distinguished himself by staging a landslide," she said. "He's not fit to be at large."

"But, my dear——" expostulated the professor.

"Not a word! You've said and done enough for one day. You're getting to be a nuisance, Fessy, and I shall have to have you abated. No, Eve doesn't want to examine the scene of your crime. Be still! Oh! I wish your hand would stop bleeding; it's making a horrid mess of my handkerchief. Why on earth you couldn't use your own and soil it——"

There was one fairly good reason, Eve supposed. She had noticed that he had used it to dry Lucia's tears. She felt a sudden uprush of tenderness for them both, tenderness that was mingled with a hot envy. How happy they must be! The secret that they shared was so wonderful and it was all their own. They took no one into their confidence; they guarded their love as jealously as though it were some priceless treasure, as indeed it was. There was a little ache in Eve's throat as she looked at them, a little smarting sting under eyelids.

Lucia rose abruptly.

"I'm going down," she said, "to make myself tidy for luncheon. I'm all messy."

"All right, dear," the professor said. "Don't get lost. But I dare say we should find you; this land, I believe, all

belongs to Mr. Fielding, and doubtless he is familiar with all the paths."

"Yes, it's all his and there's more, too." Lucia paused to look over her shoulder. "His lands are very wide indeed. And he has any number of horses, of course." She swung languidly away, leaving Eve to digest this bit of insolence.

The professor looked after her as long as she was in sight. Then he turned to Eve.

"Isn't she wonderful?" he asked boyishly.

Eve nodded.

"Very."

"Sometimes," he said, "I cannot really believe I'm alive, I'm so unbelievably happy. My dear," he said, touching her arm timidly, "there is nothing in the world to compare with love. Nothing."

Eve turned sharply. But there was no guile in the gentle eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses.

"Isn't there?" She shook her head. "I wonder!"

CHAPTER XI.

Some hours later, Eve stood with Thornton at their old meeting place. Low over the scarred breast of Thumb Cañon, a bank of leaden clouds hung, blackly ominous, reinforced by masses of vapor that drifted constantly eastward between the girdling peaks. Not a breath of wind was stirring; the air was close, heavy, lifeless. A thin, hot haze of golden transparency lay over the valley like a luminous veil.

"It will storm before long," Eve prophesied. "We must be starting for the ranch, unless we want to get a drenching." She reached for her gloves, which she had left on a rock, then drew back quickly, her hand poised in mid-air. Beside the gloves lay a small metal object that glittered dully in the sun.

"I rode after Granny last night and induced her to give it back," Thornton answered the question in Eve's wide eyes. "I thought perhaps you might wear it again."

She shook her head distastefully.

"No! It was very good of you to trouble, though. Shall we start for the ranch?"

"Presently. If you don't mind, Eve, I—I should like to talk to you for just a few minutes, first."

"I'd rather not, Ned."

"Please!" There was command rather than request in his tone, authority rather than supplication in the way he motioned her back to her seat on the rock. "At least, you will hear what I have to say."

"It can do no possible good, Ned. My mind is quite made up, and, as I told you in New York, nothing you can say or do will change it."

"Still, I must ask you to listen to me. If, after that, Eve, you are determined to marry Fielding—"

"He has not asked me."

"But he is going to to-night?"

She shrugged.

"How do I know? Do you imagine he said to me: 'My dear Miss Delevan, on such and such an evening, I shall do you the honor to request you to become my wife?'"

"That," Thornton told her sternly, "is mere quibbling, and quite unworthy of you."

Eve's small head went up proudly.

"Very well, then," she said crisply, "if you must know, I have every reason to believe that to-night Mr. Fielding intends to ask me to marry him."

"And you intend to answer—"

"Yes! So much for so much."

"Have you thought of what it means, Eve?" At the grave tenderness in his voice, all the defiance went out of the girl's bearing.

"Yes, Ned," she said gently, "I have thought. I've thought until it seemed

to me that my brain would burst, and there's only one way out. I can't marry a poor man and I won't! Lay the blame at whatever door you like; the result is the same. I wasn't brought up to be happy in poverty, comparative or otherwise. I should be acutely miserable and so would every one else around me. It's to be regretted, of course, but it's a fact, and there's no use in going into hysterics over it and talking a lot of plausible platitudes. We've been over all this before, I think. Why insist on digging things up? One only has to bury them again. Let's not discuss it any more."

"But hasn't it ever occurred to you that there may be a good deal of truth in 'plausible platitudes,' Eve? I agree with you that there is no need to wax hysterical, but why not look the situation squarely in the face?"

"I have."

"You have not!" he flashed. "You've deliberately shut your eyes and closed your mind to the most important thing of all. You say you've thought. You haven't, really. You've spent a good deal of time figuring out how you could keep from genuine thinking, and fooled yourself into believing that you were giving yourself and me a square deal. Instead, you're being hideously unfair to both of us."

"Indeed!" she murmured. "You seem to be very accurately informed as to the state of my mental processes."

"I am," he declared grimly. "I'm better informed than you are—and as to the real state of your heart, too. Eve, you don't love Brand Fielding!"

"It seems to me you've said that before, Ned."

"And you do love me! I've told you that before, too, and it's true. You've confessed it."

"I have not!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"Not in so many words, perhaps, but the truth was in your eyes yesterday.

I know it; you know it, but you haven't the courage to admit it to yourself. You've evaded it persistently and willfully, because that petty, tawdry shell that your father's mistake built around the real *you* craves luxury and is willing to go to any despicable lengths to get it. Money! the commonest, cheapest thing on earth—and you'd sell yourself, body and soul, for it!"

"You are impertinent and insulting, as usual." She spoke quite without emotion, but her hands were clasped tightly together in her lap. For the first time since she could remember, she was very much afraid she was going to cry. It had been a trying two days, and her nerves were stretched to the breaking point.

"I shall not listen to you any longer."

"You will, and you will hear the truth now if you never heard it before and never do again," Thornton told her doggedly. "I've followed you over half a continent to tell it to you; and you're going to listen to me!"

He stood over her trenchantly, his good-looking, boyish face set in stern, austere lines. His voice was harsh but through all its harshness ran a strain of passionate sincerity.

"Fifteen years ago," he said, "right here on this same spot, you told me that you loved me and would marry me. Of course, you were only a child, then, a little wild, untamed thing, but you were *honest*. You didn't know the meaning of the words 'deceit' or 'subterfuge.' You defied your father and fought like a panther to keep from being sent away from me. The last thing that you screamed out when the train was leaving the station was a promise to come back."

"And one always takes seriously the love lyrics of a child of ten," Eve observed ironically.

"The child of ten was more honorable, according to her lights, than is the woman of twenty-five!" he flung

back at her. "As a child loved, so you loved me, and were not afraid to confess it! You *meant* to come back, and both of us knew it.

"Then they took you to New York, put you into a strait-jacket of convention and hypocrisy, and forced you to grow to fit it. When I found you, they had 'cultured' and 'refined' you until you were deformed almost out of all semblance to a real woman—almost, but not quite. Even then, you loved me, and you would have married me if your father's death had not revealed his insolvency. That is, you'd have married me on your terms, had I been willing to accept them. As long as you had plenty of money, you'd have been willing enough to marry for love. But they had made a coward out of you, a petty, selfish little coward, afraid to face life squarely, afraid of everything real. You wanted to be cushioned in luxury, useless, idle, worthless luxury—being the daughter of Hugh Delevan, multimillionaire, had done that for you—and the only way you could get your cushions was to buy them with yourself.

"Eve," the young man's voice rang to a deep, throbbing note, "there is one thing and one only that justifies marriage and makes it anything but a sordid, commercial bargain. In your heart, you know it. You can go to Fielding if you will, and have all the extravagant luxuries that his money will buy for you; but if you do it, it will be in the full and clear knowledge that you have sold yourself, body and soul, that you have degraded your womanhood and debased yourself. You can forswear your love, deny it. There is nothing on earth to prevent you from doing it but yourself. Only, before you decide, Eve, think; remember that I love you and always shall; remember that it's for the whole of both our lives."

Eve sat motionless, staring straight in

front of her with fixed, troubled eyes. Her lips were pressed close to still their trembling; her hands were clasped so tightly together that the rings cut into the flesh.

A sudden gust of wind shook the pine tree above her head, lashed the branches together, and then wailed away, leaving a dead, oppressive stillness. The luminous haze had shaded to saffron; the sun, a copper-colored ball of fire, leered down from a sullen sky. In the valley below, a jumble of moving black dots showed where the riding horses were being drawn toward the paddock.

"There were very many ponies," the young man quoted softly. "I can offer you little besides my love, Eve, but will you take it, and me?"

She started to her feet.

"It is *you* who are selfish!" she cried passionately. "You are asking me to give up everything that makes life worth living! You yourself say that you can offer me nothing but love, and how long does love last when one is poor? I can't be poor, I tell you; I won't be poor! Suppose I do care for you. Must I sacrifice everything for that? You are to give up nothing. You want me to give up everything! And I can't—I won't!"

"Is my love for you nothing, Eve? Does it mean nothing to you at all?"

She made a quick, impatient gesture, but her eyes had softened.

"I—I'm sorry," she said. "Won't you believe that I'm sorry for you, Ned? If it were possible, I'd do as you wish. Your happiness *does* mean something to me; it means a great deal! I think I'm just beginning to realize how much! I'm sorry!"

"Sorry?" he echoed. "For what?"

"That I've got to hurt you. For I must. It's no use talking any more." She half turned away. "I'm sorry," she repeated dully.

Thornton's arms dropped heavily to his sides.

"You say you're sorry for me, Eve," he said. "For myself, I'm more sorry for you. You've made your choice of your own free will. Hearts and souls are such useless, silly things, are they not? 'But what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'"

Her tormented eyes went to him. Her face was pale and drawn, with a line of white sharply pinched about the mouth. He was gazing fixedly at a spot beyond her and to the right.

"Look!" he said.

His right arm rose stiffly, the forefinger pointing. She looked. There on the grass, where it had lain, ebony black under the glare of the copper sun, *her shadow was slowly paling, fading.*

For an instant, she stood there, fascinated, rigid, motionless, her eyes dilating in terror. Then her low, pitiful cry mingled with the scream of the swooping wind, and she flung herself upon Thornton's breast, her arms about his neck, her gray lips moving convulsively.

"Take me, Ned!" she was whispering over and over again. "Take me away with you and save me from myself!"

There was a sudden flare of blinding green light, a reverberating crash that made the great rock tremble; and then the whole world seemed to plunge into shrieking, black fury, as the storm broke.

CHAPTER XII.

"I don't care whether it's possible or not; I tell you, I saw it, with my own eyes!" For once, Mrs. Stanton was stirred out of her habitual languid calm. With one small clenched fist, she thumped Fielding's powerful binoculars which lay on the arm of her chair, and she brought her teeth together with a snap on the last word. "I *saw* it, I tell you!" she repeated. "I had the glasses to my eyes, watching the rock, and when that first brilliant flash came, one

of the figures rushed toward the other. Then there was a flicker of red light, the weirdest thing I ever saw, for all the world like the flames from the pit when the devil goes down into hell through the stage trapdoor, and everything went black. Positively, it gave me the creeps!"

"But, my dear, it stands to reason that——" the professor began to demur mildly.

"But, my dear, it *doesn't* stand to reason!" his wife snapped him up. "It stands to absolutely nothing of the sort. There's no path to the top of the rock, so no one *human* could have been up there. But, if the figures *weren't* human, what were they? Spooks? Witches? Ghosts?"

"Storm demons at their revels," Fielding suggested, good-naturedly, and Claire promptly chimed in with:

"Why, the Indian princess and her faithful lover, of course."

"Oh, of course!" Lucia said impatiently, and thumped the glasses again. "Probably he got tired of listening to her wail and decided to forgive her."

"Or that her penance was ended and her soul redeemed," the professor put in, thoughtfully moving the binoculars out of harm's way. He was extremely pleased with his own pleasant conceit, and repeated it happily to himself.

"A nice idea, that," Fielding commended, adding jocularly: "If there's anything in it, the death fire isn't going to burn to-night. See, the moon is rising. Very soon we shall be able to judge of Professor Stanton's reliability as a prophet."

Over the top of the tall spruce the round disk of the moon was slowly climbing. It seemed to poise for an instant on the massed blackness, and then swept upward, a shining silver globe on a star-jeweled, purple arch.

Fielding moved over to where Eve was sitting quietly in the shadows.

"You feel no ill effects from your wetting this afternoon?" he asked.

"Thanks; I'm quite all right."

"We were going out to the terrace, you remember?" he said.

There was a pause before she spoke.

"Will you release me from that promise, please?" she asked quietly. "I should prefer not to keep it. And—forgive me!"

He stiffened a little; his quick glance darted from her to Thornton and back again. He bowed.

"As you wish. Certainly there is nothing to forgive. It appears that the fire does not burn to-night; there seems to be no sign of it." He was turning away when Thornton touched him on the arm.

"I think," the young man said, too low for the others to hear, "that I have fathomed the mystery of that fire. The lightning this afternoon shattered the big boulder that had fallen across the path up Council Rock. It was the reflection of the moonlight on the red surface of that boulder that gave the illusion of a fire. The path to the top of the rock is clear now."

"So," said Fielding slowly. "I'm wondering how you know—and wondering—" He stopped; his eyes dwelt significantly on the binoculars the professor was still guarding.

"It's only fair to tell you at once," Thornton said. "You've been mighty square and decent to me. I—I've won, Mr. Fielding."

The older man betrayed no sign of emotion.

"It's all settled?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"Then I congratulate you. And I'm glad, genuinely glad for both of you!" He held out his hand. Thornton grasped it warmly.

"But it's rather rough on you!"

Fielding laughed.

"My dear boy, I'm perfectly content with the outcome, just as I should have

been perfectly content had the decision been in my favor. As I explained to you when I agreed to let you come out here to make a final effort for your happiness, if Eve had been absolutely heartless, she would have made me an ideal wife. I no longer desire to play at love; I am lured by and interested in no romantic attachment. The woman who becomes the mistress of my home, if one ever does, must be clever, decorative, and emotionless; in other words, a charming figurehead, who will companion me, amuse me, interest me, but never love me. I thought that, in Eve, I had found such a woman. I was quite willing to allow you to try to prove me wrong. You seem to have done so quite successfully, and you have really done me a service. It would have been rather a tragedy for me to marry a woman with a soul—a tragedy for both of us, I fancy. I have my shortcomings, Thornton. And I am really fond of Eve, you know. Good luck to you!" He laid his hand briefly on the young man's shoulder, and turned to the professor. "All honor to you, Stanton!" he called out. "The death fire burns no longer; Waunema-hee has found her soul."

"How interesting!" yawned Lucia, surreptitiously withdrawing her fingers from the professor's clasp. "Fessy a prophet! Fancy!"

Thornton went back to Eve.

"Do you hear anything?" he asked, bending over her, his lips close to her ear.

Her smile answered him.

"It—it seems different, somehow," she said. "That is, it does to me. Listen!"

Mingled with the rustling whisper of the west wind among the spruce branches was a soft, rhythmic murmur like the music of sweet-toned instruments afar off, blending in a clear, low harmony that sang of spring and youth and love.



Making Fine Birds

By Grace Hodgson Flandrau

I HAVE never—I make the shameful admission frankly—been smart, that is to say, chic, dernier cri, stylish, in a word, smart. I have always worn clothes, of course, but worn them, generally speaking, to cover me up, and looked upon them chiefly from that point of view. Not that I didn't hope vaguely that they would be pleasing to the eye, would fit and be becoming. I did hope so! It is possible I may have fatuously expected them to be smart. Perhaps I even went so far as to think they were. But that was before I *knew*; before I had spent three weeks and sums I do not know and dare not learn, in the smaller temples of upper Fifth Avenue and the East and West Fifties; before the high-collared, world-weary, languid, and disdainful Theda Baras, who undulate among the Bappé models and André hats and Gaga lingerie, had spoken to me of lines, and made known to me the inner meaning of the silhouette.

Furthermore, having been interned, for an endless time, on a ranch in Arizona, recovering from typhoid, the only tangible result of a Red Cross course, I had gleaned from such rumors and reading matter as penetrated to our wilderness, that women, during the war, had rather forgotten about clothes, had got out of the way of being smart. However, it isn't really war time any

longer, I suppose, and if you have any doubts as to what women think about, go to New York.

I went. The whole thing began by my father getting married again, and my writing a certain phrase to aunt Leonora. The announcement of this unusual performance of father's caused us an immense sensation. We did not mind, you understand; but we couldn't see just why any one should wish to marry father. He is in some ways very agreeable, I have no doubt, although he is a person I have seen very little of. But, in an intimate relation, he is rather trying. That, at least, is what my half-sister, who is much older than I, and with whom I live, says. She has been married, and has lived in the Far West on a big ranch for ever so long, but she remembers.

It seems that father is the sort of person who always wants to do the things he can't do, and never wants to do those he can. He also wants to tell the people who do very well the things he can't do, how to go about it. All this makes it difficult to have him about the place. Laundresses and chambermaids and chauffeurs leave immediately. It's fortunate that he doesn't like the ranch, because my brother-in-law knows all about sheep and it's a business that must be run exclusively by some one who does know. The pas-

toral life does not suit father. For years he has had his own rooms in New York, and has made quite a career of dining out and seeing a great deal of people, mostly women, who don't know how to do anything, and so can't suffer from his advice.

What with these peculiarities and the fact that he is not, of course, young, and hasn't much money, we did wonder why she wanted to marry him, she being fashionable and rich, and coming from a family in Baltimore quite as good as father's is in New York. But, anyway, she did it, and they went South on their wedding trip, leaving word that I was to meet them in New York when they got back, and go with them to Long Island for the summer.

"You must," wrote my aunt, who had told us all about it, "come to me first, and be smartened up. I decided on *that* as soon as you wrote me that all your own clothes were worn out. For once, we can begin at the beginning and begin right. It will be a great pleasure, my child, to see you properly outfitted. Happily, your aunt is away for some weeks, so she will not be able to—to—I mean to say we will have the time entirely to ourselves, and that is always desirable. I am glad you are feeling better, for I have been completely worn out with war work, and must, the doctors say, have a complete change. Doing the shops with you will give it to me. I have temporarily resigned from all my committees and beg you, my dear child, when you come on to bring up the terrible subject as little as possible. I understand that you expect to go abroad this fall, but we can discuss that later. For the time being, we'll just devote ourselves to making you presentable for the summer. Your stepmother entertains a great deal and you will need—" So she went on indefinitely.

I was really very proud of aunt Leonora when I found her waiting for

me outside of the station in her little Renault town car. She has that air which makes, I find, even milliners unbend, and the queen mothers of the nine-hundred-dollar negligees all but cringe, when she appears. This morning, the upper part of her was wound in several yards of flat sable scarf and one eye was almost obliterated by the dashing, downward tilt of a small hat. It went up just as violently behind, and faded into a thin hedge of paradise feathers that waved lightly like transparent seaweed in a submarine movie. No hair was visible except a wave drawn back from the pearls in each ear. A pair of pointed, long-nosed slippers stuck out from under her skirt, which was of dull black satin and clung to her legs. Aunt Leonora smelled, in a subdued way, as expensive as she looked, and I was afraid to kiss her, for fear I'd interfere with something; her complexion, for instance. It didn't look false, but then it didn't look real. No powder or paint were apparent and yet it didn't look like just plain, ordinary skin. She kissed me, however, without seeming to take any precautions, and was most cordial and glad to see me. She then told me she was lunching out, but would come for me at three.

"You look very well, aunt," I remarked.

"Oh, dear, no," she replied. "I look shockingly! I am anything but well, and it's no wonder! I really slaved this winter. Your uncle felt very strongly about it. And," she added pensively, "as soon as you are outfitted, I expect to have an operation."

"Oh, aunt, how terrible!" I exclaimed, much shocked. "What kind of an operation?"

"Well, I really haven't decided yet. I shall want something very thorough, to tone me up. That's what you should have done instead of stopping so long out in that horrid climate."

"But I love it there and it has done me heaps of good! I never felt better and I've gained a lot, six inches just around my waist!"

My aunt evinced extraordinary emotion.

"Around your waist! Why that's a perfect calamity, and coming just now, of all times! If you had put it on higher up or even below, but at the waist! Well, we shall simply have to get it off."

"But I feel so much better with——"

"No one can feel better who has gained six inches around the waist. I knew all along that an operation was what you needed."

"There was nothing to operate for, aunt Leonora."

"They could have found something. However, it's all right. It's fortunate that you told me at once. I shall put you on bran wafers and kumiss right away. In fact, I'll go in myself, when I drop you, and leave the order, so there will be no mistake. Diet will do it, if it's strict enough."

"I'm not to have anything to eat but bran wafers and that, what do you call it, whatever it is?"

"Kumiss. It's wonderful! One of those Bulgarian preparations."

"Not *buttermilk*!" I exclaimed, with a sinking heart.

"Oh, dear, no! Kumiss is much more scientific. The milk is scientifically treated with bacilli and——"

"Is it—is it sour?"

"Acid would be a better word."

"Acid!" This was frightful, and aunt Leonora has a will of iron.

"Aunt, I cannot do this. I'm hungry. I feel so well I'm hungry all the time. I hate bran! I abhor sour milk! The doctor said I was to eat."

"Wants you to eat with *that* figure?" She gave my person one pained glance.

"I can't think what kind of a doctor he must be! But we simply won't discuss it, my child. The silhouette is

flat this year, *absolutely flat*. There is nothing more to be said."

The next morning, after breakfasting on three thin pieces of cork filled with sawdust and a poisonous drink tasting like sour ice-cream soda, I prepared to accompany my aunt on the great drive.

"Please, dear aunt," I ventured to remark as we set forth, "don't take me to your own shops! They would be much too expensive for me! Let's go to some little place, reasonably priced, you know."

"Small place! If you're going to skimp on things, that wouldn't do at all! The smaller the shops are, the more they charge, of course." She looked doubtful. "I really don't know, however. We'll try your way first. There's no harm in trying, and you'll see for yourself. I never advise excessive economy in clothes. It doesn't pay in the end."

"To the Maison Alexandre, Pierce," she said, as we got into the motor.

"Maison Alexandre" did not sound economical to me, but I became reconciled to an economy that should not be excessive, when I saw the dashing appearance of the things in the windows. A young man with a very small waist, a medium-sized mustache, and the most impressive clothes and hair I have ever beheld, met us at the door. He was amiable and even gallant, but detached, as though it were no concern of his whether even my aunt visited his bazaar. He was surrounded by saucy-looking hats, perched on little wooden heads painted with faces and curls, and looking like futurist portraits, and a troupe of large ladies with black hair and hooked noses and the most domineering and awe-inspiring busts I have ever seen, presided over the headgear.

My aunt swept past these leopard women with great indifference, and we creaked up to the second floor in a pea-green elevator painted with garlands

and smelling of stale doughnuts. I don't know why it should smell of doughnuts, except that any air that has not been reoxygenized for ten or twenty years, smells of doughnuts. We emerged from this ambulating boudoir into a large pea-green salon lined with mirrors and Theda Baras. The latter all wore black gowns that came up to their ears and went down to their finger nails, and were very tight everywhere except where you would expect them to be, and their daylight make-up was a trifle strong. I had thought the busts in the millinery alarming, but found the total absence of them in the "Robes et Manteaux" even more so. In fact, I am unable yet to say which type of fashionable saleswoman is the more dismaying, the Nordica or the Sarah Bernhardt.

As I emerged from the elevator, there was no perceptible display of activity among the black-swathed nymphs, but when my aunt appeared, a noticeable undulation swept through them and Madame Sarah Bernhardt herself, disguised as a brunette of thirty-seven, stepped forward.

"Ah, madame," she cried effusively, addressing herself to my aunt, "it ees a pleasure to zee you here. You do not remember me? I was wit François. Do you not remember Olga?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure," my aunt replied, looking about her with vague coldness. "How did you happen to come to this place?" This last with a faintly damning intonation.

"But I am what you call 'eet,' head woman, here! *Je suis la première*. Fine posection! It was for zat."

"Well, that's very nice, I'm sure. Have you got anything for this young lady?"

Madame Olga instantly registered cordiality on my behalf, but it was an unconvincing demonstration. Her mouth went through the motions of smiling, but her eyes devastated my

apparel as she murmured, "Veree charm-ing, veree charm-ing," adding in a honeyed moan, "but will madame not shop for herself?"

My aunt smiled cryptically. The way she holds her own with these high priestesses is positively imperial.

"And what type of costume for zee young ladee, madame, *tailleur*, afternoon frock, *robes de bal*? I send in many dress I select myself for made-moiselle, for all occasion. Mees Calahan, here please, Mees Calahan!"

The lady so addressed detached herself from the group behind us, and stepped forward. Her manner was one of suave cordiality, indeed of enthusiasm. I was disarmed. I felt that, seen in masses, they might be forbidding, but individually these ladies were as human as anybody. She smiled on us.

Presently a whole army corps of dresses was being marched through the small private salon to which I retired with my aunt and Miss Calahan. Aunt Leonora viewed them inimically through a lorgnette.

"None of them are possible, except the blue serges," she said, after the review had gone on for an hour or so. I had seen several enrapturing garments, but had not dared to venture an unsupported opinion.

"Clear them all out except the blue serges," she went on calmly to the outraged head. The energetic smile had now thoroughly vanished from the mouth of that lady, and a cold storm swept from her eyes across the rest of her face. Alone, I should not have withstood it. But if my aunt noticed at all it was only to be inspired by it to further audacities.

"Now, Lala, if you see anything you really fancy among these, we might consider it."

"Which do you like, aunt?"

"No, no, it's for you to decide."

Nothing had been said so far about money, no base whisper of price. And,

in spite of my aunt's superciliousness, I did not feel that this was a place where they gave things away with pink trading stamps. The young man on the first floor and Madame Olga's accent prepared me for the worst. So I inspected the gowns cautiously. There was one to which my heart went out. It was long-waisted, with a sash, and a lot of black satin all covered over with braid. But it looked costly, prohibitive. I renounced it and examined further. I had heaps of other things to buy, so at last, reluctantly, I settled on a perfectly plain little sort of a morning dress—no trimming, gathered skirt with two big pockets and plain long-sleeved bodice. I didn't like it much, but I pretended I did.

"Well," said my aunt, with enthusiasm and some surprise, "not a bad choice!"

"Miss Taylor has shown perfect taste," said Miss Calahan, turning on the smile again. "This is our best model. It's the original, too. A Bobo Sœurs."

"How much is it?" I inquired, with sudden misgiving.

"Let me see." She reached into the gown and presently fished forth a ticket on a yellow string. "Why, it's only a hundred and ninety-five! Well, I'm real surprised! A week ago this very model was showing at two twenty-five."

I, too, was surprised—not to say dazed. It was impossible! A hundred and ninety-five dollars for that thing! Why, forty-seven fifty, or fifty-seven forty, or seventy-four—my brain reeled. Aunt Leonora, however, rather came to life. She showed sudden interest.

"Let me have it," she commanded, taking the dress from Miss Calahan and examining it.

"Will you put it on for the fitter, miss?"

"Well, no! I—I think it's rather expensive."

"Expensive," cried Miss Calahan in a tone of mingled astonishment and grief, and an instant eclipse of the glad look. "Expensive for a Bobo Sœurs model! An original Bobo! Really, miss," she laughed sardonically. "Why, I told you that a week ago——"

"Never mind, never mind about a week ago, Miss Calahan," said my aunt shortly. "If Miss Taylor finds it too expensive, we can look somewhere else."

Miss Calahan's manner became instantly subdued, though I could see she was only placated on the surface.

"Oh, of course, we have much cheaper gowns! This, for instance." She picked up my braided favorite, disdainfully. "This is only a hundred and ten, but naturally it hasn't got the lines, and it's only a copy."

"Of course, that frock is impossible!" said my aunt. "But why not copy the Bobo Sœurs model?"

"I'm sure I don't know if it can be done," replied the temperamental Miss Calahan, still much ruffled at not having sold the gown outright, as she had evidently thought she was about to do. "I will speak to Madame Olga."

"Let Madame Olga come to me," aunt Leonora replied crisply. "I will speak to her myself."

Well, the outcome of it all was that a copy of the Bobo at the ridiculously low price of a hundred and fifty dollars was ordered for me, and we went off to lunch.

"I hope you don't have trouble with them before you're through," said my aunt, after we got to the Ritz and she had ordered cork wafers and kumiss for me, and crab Ravigote and a broiled bird for herself. "One is very apt to get into all kinds of difficulties at those cheap places."

"I don't know how you can call it cheap, aunt, when they wanted a hundred and ninety-five dollars for that perfectly plain——"

"That was cheap if it was a model. The trouble is you never know what to believe in places like that. These big specialty shops on the Avenue are not reliable. They cater to the transient trade almost entirely. The behavior of that Calahan person, when she thought she wasn't going to make the sale was typical. It would never have happened in one of the really good places!"

"Well, for Heaven's sake, don't take me to a really good place! Let's go to a few nice, old department stores."

"No, Lala, they simply won't do! You don't want to pass your own costume a dozen times on Fifth Avenue."

"I shouldn't mind, if it was a good one. I saw some awfully cutey ones sailing up and down to-day, even if they all did look alike. If they came from department stores, I——"

But my aunt was not listening. She inspected the room through her glasses and ignored me.

"For instance," I went on, "there were a lot of women in capes, sort of capes with sleeves and belts in front. You know those capes, aunt. You see lots of them. Couldn't I——"

"Lala," she said, sharply, clicking her glasses together, "what you see a lot of is exactly what you must *not* have! Don't butter your wafers, dear."

I have no words for the kindness and patience shown me by aunt Leonora during the days that followed, and the full extent of her generosity and genuine interest in seeing me lead a better life, as far as externals are concerned, were made known to me the next day. We were in one of her own favorite shops, the "really nice" establishment of Miss Lizzie O'Donahan. And right here, there is one thing I would like to say for the small and "really nice" places like this one, and that is that there the salespeople do not work on the commission basis. This is a custom which, of course, obtains everywhere else and may be very nice for

the salespeople and very nice for the shops, but distinctly is not for the shopper, making it indeed increasingly unpleasant to buy, or more especially not to buy. The cold disappointment, not to say resentment, manifested by many of the clerks over the failure to sell anything from a bit of neckwear to a fur coat is something the owners of department stores and specialty shops all over the country, but more especially in New York, ought to curb. However, this chronicle is not propaganda but art, so let us proceed.

A dinner gown had just been chosen for me by the combined judgment of my aunt and the famous Miss Lizzie herself. It was Nile-green chiffon and, contrary to all precedent, came unexpectedly high up in the front and unexpectedly far down behind, so that coming, I was clad to the collar bone, and going, I was stripped to the waist. I should have preferred it the other way round, as being more traditional, so to speak, but did not, in view of the enthusiasm of the two experts, venture to say so. It was beautiful to see the harmony of soul that existed between my aunt and the great designer. Madame Lizzie possessed, I had been informed by aunt Leonora, the rare and indefinable quality of smartness, to the very highest degree. When we went in, she had struck me as a middle-aged British spinster who was both dowdy and untidy. But it appeared, I was wrong. She wore, for some inscrutable reason, a riding habit, and her coarse, sandy hair of uneven lengths and wayward tendency, floated out in every direction.

"Smart, smart!" murmured my aunt fondly, gazing at the place in the back of Lizzie's neck, where her flannel shirt parted company with her equestrian stock. "Lizzie has it so utterly!"

"Does she rush out and have a gallop between fits?" I whispered back.

"I don't think she's ever seen a

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horse," was the reply. "But she quite has it. Oh, quite!"

I then realized that there were kinks in the cult of smartness that not only had been undreamed of in my simple philosophy, but would always remain so.

The atmosphere of Madame O'Donahan's place is extremely pleasant and informal. It is a small establishment, for every one knows she only dresses the real people. Needless to explain to the enlightened and sophisticated reader who the real people are. He understands the values of the sacred mystery called society, as well as I or even Miss Lizzie or my aunt. And there is, of course, a total absence of the black-clad priestesses, with their made-up cheeks and eyes so firmly fixed on possible commissions that they forget to smile when the lips do, who had met and vanquished me in the other shops. No, every one was jolly and sporty and plain. Madame Lizzie's riding habit struck the note of the establishment. Just now she was speaking.

"Of course," she said, as I stood before her, arrayed in the green gown, "this model could be fitted to Miss Taylor, but it would be better to do her a new one in a smaller size."

"For about the same price, Miss Lizzie?"

"No, it would be rather cheaper than the model, of course. Around three hundred and fifty, I think."

"Never!" I burst out, deprived by the shock of this disclosure of the delicacy with which one usually approaches the subject of money. "Never will I pay such a price!"

"My dear Lala," said my aunt, "you have nothing to do with prices. Your father is relying on me to see this thing properly done and it will be arranged with him afterward. Besides, I intend to make you a few little presents, you know, so please hush."

"But, aunt!"

"Lala, I cannot be nagged. It's difficult enough, anyway, Heaven knows, with your waistline and——"

And so it was settled. The gown was ordered and we departed, my aunt in great good humor. When we were in the car, she suggested that we go to Nellie Somebody's for tea.

"She's having something special; I don't recall just what; I think a lecture on the reconstructed villages. No, because I told her I wasn't going to any war things just now. Was it some one to read *vers libre*, or was it a Persian poet? Stupid of me to forget! She told me about it at Benjamin's opening, but I was preoccupied with the hats. I saw one for you that day, by the way, and told him to lay it aside, so if you don't care to go to Nellie's——"

"But I have to go to Maison Alexandre and try on the Bobo."

My aunt's face darkened.

"That awful place! I took such a dislike to the tailor. I don't see how I can bring myself to go!"

"Don't; why should you? Go and hear the Persian person read *vers libre* about French villages. I'll go alone," I added courageously.

"I don't know whether I can trust you. The little frock really isn't bad, if you don't all do something to it, among you."

I reassured her, and she dropped me at the door. I really hated going alone. The thought of being delivered over to Olga and Calahan, unprotected, was vaguely terrifying and justly so, as will be seen. In fact, my aunt's aversion to seeing the Alexandre tailor cost me just ninety-one dollars and fifty cents. One pays so much more dearly for weakness than for crime.

You see, when they brought in the little gray silk dress and said it was only seventy-nine fifty, the shock of

anything costing less than a hundred dollars so unsettled my mind that I may have committed myself more than I imagine. Held up like that in front of me, it did look very nice. It was serviceable, and the sort of frock I needed. Mesdames Olga and Calahan were all smiles and amiability. Yes, I thought I would take it if—now, I may not have expressed this quite so clearly, but certainly I supposed the clause to be understood—if it was becoming when I tried it on.

"Keep the skirt fitter down," murmured Madame Olga through a slit in the doorway to some one on the other side.

I slipped into the seventy-nine dollar gown. The effect was strangely disappointing.

"*Ravissante, but char-ming!*" cried Madame Olga. "*La ligne est parfaite!*"

"It certainly does look grand!" said Miss Calahan, gazing at it with her cryptic, blue gaze. "The lines are grand on her!"

"But," said I, "this, and right here, you see how it—"

"But wait, *attendez donc, mademoiselle!*" Olga called to the person outside the fitting room, and a woman came in, with a large pincushion attached to her stomach. Madame Olga issued a series of commands, and the lady with the pincushion knelt down and began transferring the pins from her person to mine. There was an interval of silence. At last Olga, triumphant:

"Now, all that ees change! Now it is perfect, *superbe!*"

"Well, I don't know—" I began.

"But I know, mademoiselle, and I say when eet ees finish, you will see for yourself."

Just then the stirring blare of a bugle sang through the roar of Fifth Avenue. It died away and a band of fifes and drums leaped into the gayest marching tune you ever heard. I

rushed to the window. A parade! A military parade with trig soldiers in olive tan and saucy-looking sailors in blue; and every few feet, bands playing jolly tunes that made you want to cry. The onlookers, packed along the sidewalks, waved little flags and clapped, and when a big silken banner floated by, they took off their hats. It was all very moving and splendid. Overseas men! I stayed there till the last one had gone by. There is no sensation on earth quite equal to weeping to a brass band.

When it was all over, I turned back reluctantly to the unmitigated boredom of dress. The Bobo was awaiting me and was carefully fitted. Then I dressed and, as I was being ushered out between a smiling Olga and a smiling Calahan, I recalled the silk frock they had showed me.

"Oh, by the way! Of course, I don't want that little taffeta dress. It really was not becoming."

My escorts ceased smiling of one accord. The hard eyes sent messages to the hard lips and I will spare you the twin outbursts of surprise and of polite and icy indignation. Of course, the frock had been ordered and fitted. Even now it was ripped and being remade to the exact measurements of my figure, the innumerable deficiencies of which became mysteriously felt. But, of course, if I had changed my mind, the loss could be theirs.

Well, I am a weak creature with a diseased longing for peace at any price in all strictly feminine relationships. The gown came home the next day, with a bill reading:

One gray taffeta	\$79.50
Alteration	12.00
	<hr/> \$91.50

I hid it, the frock, not the bill, which I paid instantly, under the bed, and not a word of this transaction did I whisper to my aunt Leonora. She has

small respect, as it is, for my moral stamina. And I thank God, she is not a fanatical housekeeper, with a mania for probing about under the furniture. The gown is a perfect fright!

I did not see my aunt again that day and the next morning her bedroom door remained closed very much later than usual. Furthermore, her maid told me that aunt Leonora had left word that she would not be able to see me until quarter of twelve. So, taking advantage of this interval, I decided to run down the Avenue and visit a good old department store, among the unexclusive counters of which I should feel more at home. I considered, too, a visit to Huyler's to obtain nourishment of a richer and more satisfying type than was, at present, to be had at home.

To-day was to be dedicated, my aunt had decreed, to the pursuit of shirt waists, so I decided just to look at the ordinary kind, although I should not, of course, buy any. My aunt would not approve of them, I felt certain, and I did not wish to have to secrete anything else under my bed.

The department store was all and more than I had hoped for. Delicious-looking things hung around, marked three ninety-eight and four eighty—I had forgotten anything could be as cheap as three ninety-eight—and there were no end of bargain counters. Signs reading: "Petticoats Reduced;" or "Fine Values in Reduced Underwear;" or "Lamp Shades Reduced from \$12.50;" "High Grade Winter Trimmings Reduced to Cost." Indeed, the place seemed to be as full of reduced finery as a Southern town is of reduced aristocrats keeping boarding houses. I wanted to buy everything that was cheap, and only considerations of my aunt kept me from going home with seven lamp shades and a few miles of winter trimmings.

My only disappointment was, on arriving at the waist counter, to find an

almost high priestess in charge. She did not differ as materially as I could have wished from the vestals of the temple Alexandre, except that she was a blonde and younger and had a nicer face. But she was dressed like the erring wife in a problem play, when remorse has set in, in clinging black, high throated, and without any waistline. She wore her face very white, with only her extremely red lips reminiscent of wickeder and happier days.

"I want to see a lot of cheap waists," said I, "all covered with machine tucks and imitation lace and false embroidery."

The second Mrs. Tanqueray looked at me with as much horror and surprise as is compatible with extreme languor.

"The blouses are not coming trimmed this season," she replied in a pinched tone.

"All right, I don't care about that. Just show me the kind that everybody wears, the common kinds that look so smart on the little girls in banana-peel shoes with high heels, and tight, blue-serge dresses."

I had a fine time among the blouses, and ended by buying two quite vulgar ones, which I knew would not take up much room under the bed. They cost five ninety apiece. Then, with a feeling of extreme guilt, I hurried home and presented myself in my aunt's room. She was just having her tea, and there was something I thought quite unusual about her appearance. Her fine, dark hair was slightly ruffled and her clear-featured, delicate face was noticeably flushed. Remembering what she had said about an operation, I felt instantly alarmed. There is something, besides her gorgeous appearance, so extremely engaging about aunt Leonora that one simply cannot endure the thought of anything happening to her.

"My dear aunt, I'm afraid you are not well!"

"Nonsense! What on earth——"

"Aunt, I'm afraid you're postponing your operation on my account. You mustn't do that if you have to have it at all."

"Operation!" said my aunt, scornfully. "I shouldn't think of having an operation."

"But I thought you said——"

"Yes, yes, to be sure," she said, hastily, "but that was before, before I changed my mind. And I can't think why you should imagine I'm not feeling well."

"Why, being in bed so late and looking, at least I thought you looked, a little feverish."

"I haven't felt so well for years," said my aunt, with a sort of ecstatic expression. "Sit down while I finish drinking this."

"I wanted to ask you about the tea yesterday afternoon. Was it French or Persian or poetic?"

"Oh, none of those things. Oh, dear, no!"

"Well, what——"

"We must talk about our plans for to-day," said she evasively. "You need both shirts and blouses, don't you, Lala?"

"Well, I don't know."

"Of course you do. We'll go to my shirt man first. Really excellent place, and one feels so sure one is not going to see the same model trotting down Fifth Avenue, on one of those little *matinée* girls. And then, there's Leonie's for blouses—the lovely little hand-tucked things, you know. She had some charming ones the other day, with collars of good filet."

I thought of the Bluebeard's closet under the bed, and shuddered.

Aunt Leonora's shirt man wasn't a man at all, but half a dozen intensely respectable Connecticut school-teachers or Scotch ministers' wives; I'm not sure which. The place is called Duncan's, a very uninteresting-looking shop

on lower Fifth Avenue. The downstairs is for men's things, and you go up in the smallest elevator I have ever seen. In the ascent my aunt and I and the elevator woman were applied to each other like plasters. The upstairs room is a terribly businesslike place, with the five or six earnest women standing about in spectacles, looking as if they were about to hold a committee meeting on how the better disposal of garbage will affect the rising generation. One of them advanced and spoke pleasantly to my aunt. I expected to hear her ask for a report. When my yearning for a few Duncan shirts was revealed to her, she motioned to a table, piled with the different models.

After some hesitation, occasioned by my not experiencing a temperamental hunger for any one in particular, I selected a simple cotton thing of dotted Swiss, like curtains are made of in the country and, being by this time very wise, asked how much was demanded for the trifle.

"This," she said, indifferently searching for the mark, "um, ah, oh, yes, this model is twenty-six fifty."

"But the silk ones are what you want, Lala. One comes to Duncan's for the silk shirts. Look at this nice, tucked, mannish thing for rough wear."

"They are nice," I admitted fearfully.

Madame Curie made no comment, and a morbid curiosity laid hold of me.

"How much are *they*?"

"That one is thirty dollars. They run from twenty to thirty dollars, depending on the style."

I directed toward my aunt one glance of bitter reproach. There had been a table full of silk shirts at the department store, reduced to eight seventy-five. Aunt Leonora was unaware of my sensations. She was examining a shirt, with the look of a keen sportsman handling a good gun.

"Excellent, oh, excellent workman-

ship!" she murmured. "They quite do it here!"

My dearest aunt was so obviously devoted to Duncan's that I desired intensely to buy something. Of course, the shirts were marvels of perfection in cut and fit, and in quality above reproach, as I afterward discovered, when wearing the two beautiful ones she gave me; but just at that moment, fifty or sixty dollars for two shirts seemed an appalling sum, especially after my heavy financial loss of the day before. So I was happy to discover a cunning, blue necktie on a figure on the counter. This I felt I could buy. It was one of those soft polka-dot ties, like little boys wear, only it was boned, and had a white turnover buttoned to it.

"I like this necktie very much. I should like several of them." Taking it off the figure, I added: "How much is it, please?"

"The stocks are seven fifty each," said Madame Curie without turning a hair.

Now, when one has dragged through an existence of almost twenty-five years without being smart, it takes more than a few new frocks and a beneficent aunt to make one become so. There is a certain mystery about it. It is a state not lightly won to. Some people are smart by birth. And it is not, beyond a certain small limitation, a question of money, unless one would achieve aunt Leonora's standards and combine quality and exclusiveness with smartness. But smartness itself need not be expensive. One must have money enough to buy *something*, that is all. If you are thus congenitally gifted, you will instinctively buy what is smart, whether it be from a Woolworth bazaar or a François Salon des Modes. *And you will wear it smartly.* And the question is whether, without this valuable instinct, you can attain to smartness? Not in three weeks. But

eventually, by dint of long thought, passion, and prayer, can you achieve it?

As far as I am concerned, there is something fatal about me. Gowns and suits of a positively malevolent chic and dash seemed, once they were being adjusted to me or even destined for me, mysteriously to change, to look as if something more should be put on or something more be taken off them. All sorts of theories were advanced to account for this. Sometimes, the not-quite-perfect effect was blamed to my hair, sometimes to the quality of the light, while I attributed it, in my aunt's hearing, to the ravages hunger had worked on my countenance. And there was, too, the great discovery made at O'Donahan's. It occurred when I was essaying the green chiffon that was the color of nice, new bank notes and might as well have been made of them. I had it on. My aunt was minutely studying me through her short-handled glasses. Madame Lizzie, not in a riding habit to-day, but trigly arrayed in a tailored shirt, with a high collar, and a tweed walking skirt, was looking at it through screwed-up eyes. Three attendants, fitters or something, were knotted together like one of those Greek groups of the barefoot dancer school, only, instead of registering joy, with uplifted bugle and a glad poise of the leg, they registered suspense.

"There is something," murmured my aunt under her breath.

Madame O'Donahan nodded. She squinted some more and then approached, with the appearance of seeing, vaguely, a light. She slid her hand down my silhouette. A look of incredulity, then of joyful relief, swept over her face.

"No wonder! Well, I'm not surprised! My dear young lady, who makes them for you?"

"Makes them for me? Nobody! I buy them in a department store for a dollar fifty."

"Oh, Lala!" burst from my aunt, a veritable groan of reproach. She looked up and her eyes and Miss Lizzie's met above my head, in a look of ineffable understanding.

"Well," she continued, rising briskly, "fortunately, we know what to do. Take the gown off Miss Taylor at once, Celestine."

The group dissolved. Eight or nine hands deftly detached the bank note, and my aunt turned to Miss Lizzie, confidentially.

"I hope madam will be able to see us right away. Do you——"

"I'll telephone," was the crisp reply. Here was indeed that wordless communion of two souls you read about.

Feeling like a young pickpocket, who has suddenly come into money and whom philanthropic women are trying to make into a lady, I was tucked into the motor beside my aunt and conveyed to a discreet brownstone house in East Thirty-seventh Street. We rang the bell and were admitted into a dingy hall, where an intensely fashionable young woman stood talking pleadingly, it seemed to me, to a wasted-looking and inexorable woman in a brown Holland apron. The latter glanced at me coldly and then perceiving my aunt, softened somewhat, not excessively, and nodded to an inner doorway.

We availed ourselves of her permission, and entered the typical, long, dreary drawing-room of the old-fashioned New York house. A dusty electric globe, high up in the ceiling, emitted a yellow glare that didn't seem to mix at all with the dull daylight struggling in through the French windows at one end of the room. A wide mirror, reaching to the floor, covered part of the side wall and repeated the ugliness of the place, and in the center of the apartment stood a table piled with sample books. Round the walls were ranged nondescript chairs and sofas. Every chair and every sofa had a fe-

male occupant, each one sitting very straight and staring stonily before her. They all looked angry, put upon, and determined.

"Is it an asylum for melancholia?" I whispered to my aunt.

"They don't like having to come to madam. They're the sort of people who usually have everything go to them, but madam positively does not go out to fit, except, oh, in some extraordinary case! If one were ordering twenty or thirty pairs, for instance. And then she's so awfully busy that one has to wait, well, some time, I must say."

I happily discovered a gilt settee in one corner, which was unoccupied, and aunt Leonora and I sat down on that. Then we, too, put on that stony, silent stare. I wondered, why every one looked that way, and came to the conclusion that it was because all the seats faced each other and one had to subliminate one's gaze, so to speak, to avoid staring personally and offensively into the countenances of the other victims. And speech, of course, was out of the question, unless one wished to address the entire assembly. So we all sat as rigid and portentously silent as if we were attending a spiritualist meeting.

"When does the séance begin?" I murmured, but aunt Leonora pursed up her lips and did not answer.

Most of the ladies about us were, I observed, somewhat massive. One could not call it fat, as that implies superfluous flesh, and there was none here. No, they were solid, but condensed. The shape of their bodies had the same relation to the ordinary shape of a stout person, as my aunt's complexion had to a skin *au naturel*. But it was all pleasing and well done. To be sure, one expected them to creak when they moved, but they didn't. And they were all, needless to say, noticeably well dressed.

There was, indeed, one exception to

the type just indicated, and somehow one felt that she was not yet a habitu   of the place. She was a delightfully jolly person, so fat that she just flowed away in every direction, with a face as sweet as a marshmallow. I took an instant fancy to her, and whiled away most of the interval by observing a sort of disappearing necklace she had round her neck. It was composed of three strands of beautiful pearls and, as she had three chins, you will understand the possibilities. Every now and then, a minion appeared in the doorway and summoned one or two of the watchful waiters, who instantly rose and marched out. In the meantime, we had been notified that madam would be with us as soon as possible.

At last she arrived, and I saw at once that she was worth waiting for. Here, one felt instantly, was a personality. How she conveyed the impression, it is impossible to say. Not, assuredly, through any physical distinction. She was very short and, I should say, almost a perfect cube in shape. I noticed, too, that she limped. Her hair was parted saucily on one side and was crisply waved and polished. It began by being snowy white for an inch or two about her very young face, but soon developed a magnificent tone of burnt umber, which was triumphantly sustained throughout. Indeed, there was something pervasively triumphant about madam. I couldn't possibly define it, but aunt Leonora says it's just genius.

She greeted my aunt in a fine bass voice, and extended a warm protectorate to me. I found it wonderfully sustaining and felt somehow, that from now on everything, whether relevant to her ministrations or not, would be well with me. After some wheedling on the part of my aunt, madam agreed to stretch a point and proceed, at once, to the construction of my silhouette. And as they talked, my aunt, deeply

searching the little, twinkling eyes of madam with her own, would murmur, from time to time, "Flat, my dear madam, flat!"

"Leave that to me," rumbled the genius, in the voice of Edouard de Rezske, "Leave it to me. Eh, young lady? But she'll have to wait on now for her measurements. They'll send in for you as soon as there's an empty booth."

With this, she gave us both a smile full of vitality and magnetism, and proceeded from the room, moving with that indescribable majesty peculiar to women who have been supremely successful in any of those professions which are vaguely not quite respectable, like dyeing hair, acting, making corsets, and selling very expensive hats.

Presently, the dear lady with the pearls was sent for and she rose and withdrew. A moment later my turn came, and I went down a long dim hallway to a rear apartment divided into cubicles. As I entered my cell, I heard a sweet, soft voice from the booth on my right, murmur, between sighs, something about being stout.

"You, stout!" boomed the vital baritone of madam. "Stout nothing. You ought to see the shapes I get! Stout nothing. And after I get through with you! You see, you're not wearing mine, yet." The tone implied that when she did wear them the marshmallow lady would be a willow wand, a wraith, a very rapier for slenderness.

There then ensued sounds of a fearful struggle, lasting several seconds, and at last madam's voice, scornful, triumphant, the fury of genius achieving:

"Look at that! No hips, no back, nothing! Nothing but pure figger!"

Quite irresistibly curious, I searched the wall for a crack, and happily discovering one, directed my gaze into the adjoining cubicle. What I saw was of a nature novel to me.

"Will it be hard to get off?" mur-

mured the soft and now rather strangled voice.

"Not when it's finished. On and off like an old shoe." Madam's voice sank another octave. "An old shoe." She rose briskly. "Annie, Jeannette!" Two work women appeared in the cell and madam was next heard from in the room on the other side of mine. This time the wall presented an absolutely visionproof surface. Not a peek could be had, but the conversation was at my disposition. A high, empty voice exclaimed:

"Dear madam, I've been waiting just hours! But, I don't mind if you'll surely have them. The twenty-ninth, you know——"

"They were promised, Mrs. Lilly."

"I know. That's what's so perfectly lovely about you, madam! You keep your promises. So different from those awful dressmakers. Now just here, madam——"

"Yes, yes, I see. Annie's put 'em on you wrong, too."

"Oh, but it's more than that!"

"Yes, Mrs. Lilly, I will fix it."

"I know, that's what so perfectly lovely about you. You always do get it right. So different from those awful——"

"Too tight now?"

"N-no. I think not." There was a sound of lashing and binding.

"Oh, that's perfectly lovely. My husband says I look just exactly the same as I did twenty-five years ago, only my figure is better."

"Um—that's nice, isn't it, now?"

"My husband wishes, though, that clothes were made like they were when we went to Vienna, on our honeymoon. You know those fitted things men liked?"

"Vienna," murmured madam deeply, with a reminiscent timbre. "Hum, I was there twenty-five years ago, too. Took a special course in anatomy and

tailoring, just to polish off the Parisian corset-fitting course.

"I didn't go there for that exactly," there was a faint chuckle and a sigh, then briskly: "Those were the days of tailoring, all right! My husband says there is nothing as pretty as a tailored suit, blue serge. He always wants me to wear blue serge. Have you seen my new one from François?"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs.——"

"My new suit from François?"

"Just a moment, Mrs. Lilly. When your maid puts these on, have her draw them only from here."

"Yes, I see. But doubtless she would anyway. She's such a good maid. Not all maids can put a corset on properly."

"Don't take the time. Takes ten minutes to put a corset on right."

"I know. I'm sure I never could manage myself."

"No, no; I guess you couldn't."

"My husband says—oh, madam, *pink* faces, please. What were we saying? Oh, I suppose"—this with a slightly commiserating sigh—"that plenty of women do have to put on their own."

"Not those who get their corsets here," said madam grimly.

Here my curtains parted and a fallow nymph, with round shoulders and thick spectacles, who might have posed as the "Problem of the Working Girl," came in with the paraphernalia to be used by the fitters. And again the flat, vacant voice from next door:

"Of course, it was expensive. François is, you know. My husband says——"

Well, thought I, madam earns the forty-five or fifty *that* pair will cost, anyway.

But in spite of the bran and the Bulgarian brew and, in spite of madam's genius and in spite of everything, those six inches around my waist persisted. This may have been due to the consid-

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erable quantities of hot chocolate with whipped cream, and lettuce-and-mayonnaise sandwiches I consumed at various little places, when not in the company of my aunt. I do not know. At any rate, it drove my aunt to a disclosure she would not otherwise have made.

It had seemed to me for quite a while that something rather mysterious was going on; that something was being concealed from me. Every other morning, my aunt was immured in her room until half past eleven or twelve, with doors persistently closed. On ordinary mornings, her door is open while she's breakfasting, and until she begins to dress, so that I can drop in and chat. And she always had a queer, disheveled look after these retirements. Then there were occasional afternoons when she quite obviously hurried off to keep some engagement she did not wish to speak of. Not that she rendered to me a strict account of her comings or goings, but she usually mentioned at what house she was lunching or calling, or whatever it was. I am not particularly curious and had not really wondered much about it, but I had noticed it.

We were in my bedroom. I had put on the blue-serge Bobo for the first time, and she was looking at me.

"The little costume is really not bad, but—" There was a pause, I, looking in the glass, rather pleased with the effect. Then she spoke again, thoughtfully:

"Lala, my child, you must do away with that ridiculous waistline of yours. We have tried various things and they have not worked. But I know what will. I know precisely what must be done."

"Aunt," I began heatedly, "I will not drink anything nastier than kumiss."

"No, no, no! If you do this, you can leave off the diet entirely. That's one of the beauties of it. You can eat

and drink anything and need never go near a doctor."

"Or have an operation?" I inquired casually.

"I have come to the conclusion that operations are both unnecessary and harmful."

"Good gracious!"

"What?"

"Nothing. But what is this lifesaver, aunt?"

"Well, the fundamental principle is, standing on your head. Now, Lala," she added hastily, "please don't try to be facetious about it. That is why I didn't speak of it before. I was afraid you would not take it seriously, and the whole system is less beneficial in an unsympathetic atmosphere."

"I am sorry. I wouldn't think of being horrid about it, aunt. But what I mean to say is, doesn't that seem queer, to stand on your head, you know?"

"It may seem queer when one is ignorant of the great principles underneath the—the treatment. And while standing on your head is the keynote, so to speak, of the system; it's not everything. There are movements, and then swallowing air is a great factor, too."

I thought if one were to go about upside down, that's about all one could swallow, but I said nothing.

"You know," she went on, "that day I went to Nellie Westlake's to tea, and I couldn't remember what we were going to hear? Well, it turned out to be a Russian. He spoke on hygiene. Awfully scientific and all that, but the gist of it was that you can cure anything, and do the most marvelous things to your figure by following this system."

"By standing on your head?"

"Yes; being upside down, you know. Just think," said my aunt, with feeling, "we're always right side up; think of it! The organs never, absolutely never, get a chance to be upside down."

"How do we know that they want to be?"

"Why, it's a change, and a change is always a rest, isn't it?"

I hesitated to confirm this. I had had several changes the past two weeks, which had not proved very restful, and was apparently about to have another, which might be even less so.

"He explained that ordinarily we only exercise our muscles and not our organs. And doing all his movements, we exercise the inner organs themselves. It's quite marvelous for reducing. Of course, the whole thing is simply Hindu," she concluded triumphantly.

Hindu! Stranger and stranger! Why is it Hindu to be upside down? Besides, I thought she had said it was Russian.

"You can't think what it does for one's lines, apart from being so wonderfully restful," went on my aunt. "All the women I know are doing it. Most of them are simply worn out from rolling bandages and cutting out canton flannel and writing checks and asking for money."

"Where and how do they do it, aunt?"

"Well, there are classes and private courses. Most of us, I mean the women one knows, take private courses. He has girls trained for it, and they come and go through the movements with you in your room. And then, it's advisable to go to his place occasionally. It's very convenient there for the snake movement and standing on your head. A big room, all padded. But you can practice everything at home, swallowing air and all that."

"Oh, yes, swallowing air!" I replied cautiously.

"You see," she spoke with intense enthusiasm, "how really Hindu it all is. Air and water are the great Hindu principles. In short, Lala, I'm determined that you shall have a course. It

will make a different person of you. I will make you a present of it."

"A present! Is it expensive?"

"Oh, no! A hundred and fifty, I believe. She can do you every other morning, after she's through with me."

"So that's what you were doing when you were shut up, and I thought you were sick!"

"Dear Lala," said my kindest of aunts, "I didn't know you were worried."

I was so charmed to return to a régime of real food that I embraced the Russo-Hindu air swallowing and acrobatics with delight. Besides, the occasional visits to what my uncle, who is my aunt's husband and of whom I have not spoken, because he would need, at least, an entire chapter, calls the "Padded Sell," were immensely diverting. Middle-aged ladies in glove-fitting bathing suits took dry swims on the padded floor, and stood on their heads with abandon, and with a wall handy to collapse on, when the balance of power shifted, which it perpetually did. I spent hours poised on the back of my neck, with my feet in the air, turned somersaults backward, and did a snake movement that would have made a name for me in vaudeville. My aunt was charmed and maintained that she could see my waistline diminishing hourly.

During all this, my trousseau proceeded magnificently. I had angry, little, round hats without any trimming, which didn't look like anything in particular when off, but which had quite an air when on. I had overcoats so beautiful that I could only wear them when the sun shone and I didn't need them, and suits with frills, and boots with thrills, and skirts with chills where they didn't meet the boots, and everything with bills, which, mostly, my fairy godmother of an aunt paid for me. And if I were not always and inevitably smart, I was, at least, at times.

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And then it was that my *real* godmother, aunt Engadine van Puyp, arrived from the South. She had remained away later than usual and perhaps it was just as well, as she and aunt Leonora do not agree. They are on opposite sides of the house and also on opposite sides of every possible question, idea, and belief known to mankind. Aunt Engadine's name is not Engadine, of course; it is Camille. But, as it's quite impossible to call any one Camille who looks just as she does, and, as she invariably tells every one in the course of every conversation she has ever had, of an incident which happened to her once in the Engadine, years ago—an incident most annoying to her at the time and to her friends and family every since—we call her Aunt Engadine, when she is not present. When she is, she is invariably addressed as auntie.

She lives in a small house just off Washington Square and is much more New York than New York itself. Her great-grandmother had kept house in the same spot and in the identical way that she does and had lived the same upright, charitable, earnest existence that does aunt Engadine. When her return became imminent, I was notified by letter that I would be expected to lunch with her at her house, the day after her arrival, at one o'clock *sharp*. But a cataclysmic happening awaited aunt Engadine. Pipes had burst in the dining room and the housekeeper had not notified her, hoping to have them repaired before her arrival. But they were not repaired and aunt Engadine came home to a flooded fireside and a necessary deviation from the order of her existence, a painfully disconcerting circumstance to auntie. The day of her return, I received a testy telegram. My godmother does not like the telephone.

Must lunch in horrid restaurant. Disapprove of them generally. Pipes broken. Silly

Gibbs did not inform. One sharp at Belgrade.
CAMILLE VAN PUYP.

Of course, aunt Leonora was not to go. She had been perfunctorily invited and had perfunctorily declined and appearances were preserved, as they had been since the quarrel which had taken place eighteen years before, over a hat. I had not seen my godmother for some time, and my recollection of her was slightly dimmed, but I knew her as a godmother of unfailing interest and thoughtfulness. I had sent her my picture the year before, taken out West, in my tweed Norfolk suit when it was new, and a sailor hat, and she had written back that she was proud of me and had framed my photograph and hung it in the living room. Encouraged by this year-old compliment, I took especial pains to look well the day of the luncheon. I wore a very snappy little dark-blue suit, with a tight skirt, and a short jacket, excessively tight in some places and excessively full in others, a round toque of dark blue, which I requested aunt Leonora's maid to put on for me, as I can never bring myself to pull hats down far enough over my eyes. She adjusted it very smartly, without any hair showing at all, except a snaky wisp glued to my cheek. At her request, I also applied some very red lip salve. I like rouge, but I do not like the sensation of lip salve—it feels so warm and sticky—but I wanted to look right. I also wore high, white-topped boots and a blue fox fur aunt Leonora had given me, close up about my throat, so that it almost covered my ears and chin. On the whole, I was quite a success. Like Lizzie O'Donahan, I distinctly "had it" that day.

All these preparations and stopping to put on a little extra powder, in the car—one wants to be very white with such red lips—made me a trifle late and, when I entered the red-velvet corridor outside of the Belgrade dining

room, it was full of people awaiting engagements, and the clock said one five. Of course, I knew my godmother would be there, as she is promptness itself. I walked slowly up the corridor, looking for her and looking at myself in the mirrors lining the place, whenever I had a chance. My dashing reflection was very pleasing, I must confess.

I had almost reached the end, when I discovered aunt Engadine. Her small figure was enthroned in a large, velvet chair, and she was wearing, it seemed to me, the identical suit she had had on six years before—severe pepper and salt tailored costume, black felt hat, high collar, and black round-toed boots. When I caught sight of her, I waved, but she did not respond, and looked impatiently beyond me. Then her eyes returned to me, lingered on my face, and suddenly a look of recognition followed, a look of recognition but more of horror, of distaste, of fury, or so it seemed to me, and yet, I felt I must be mistaken.

"Hello, auntie," I began jauntily.

"Lala, Lala Taylor, is it possible that this is *you*, and I was just looking at you and wondering how such a dreadful, impossible show-girl sort of person ever got in here! Where did you get those awful clothes?" She looked about apprehensively and added: "What if we should be seen?"

Aunt Engadine has extremely thin features, a sharp nose, which points straight out at you like an accusing finger, and a great deal of fair, naturally curly hair of which she is rather proud and which, in defiance of the passing mode, she always wears protruding from under her hat, in a tuft over her forehead. The ensemble is, at any time, suggestive of a well-bred, but touchy, French poodle and to-day the likeness was exact. I was profoundly disconcerted. It suddenly occurred to me that perhaps, sitting down,

less of me might be visible than standing up. So I sat down abruptly. But in this hope I was wrong, for my skirt, while it was ankle length, standing, proved to be knee length, sitting, and my aunt's perception of this fact caused me to rise again hastily.

There followed a moment of silence in which aunt Engadine visibly struggled for self-control, and I surreptitiously licked the paint off my lips and swallowed it, feeling that, after all, one can die but once. Presently, she spoke.

"I am exceedingly sorry this has occurred, Lala, but you brought it on yourself. To find you in such an outrageous, such a terrible costume, violating every tenet of good breeding and even of decency was, I must say, a shock to me. And then all that stuff on your face, just like the nondescript women who habitually eat in these places!" She looked about her. "I have always disliked restaurants and now, I abhor them," she added, as though the restaurant were in some obscure way a sharer in my guilt.

I was glad not to bear the burden alone. We proceeded to the dining room and when my legs were under the table and my lip paint in my stomach, and I had taken off the smart fur, which had added not a little to my appearance, and pushed my hat above my eyebrows, the horizon cleared.

"So you came on to be with your stepmother," said my aunt, after she had demanded of the waiter, with considerable asperity, whether he had anything fit for plain people to eat, and not full of white wine and truffles, and had ordered cold cuts, baked potatoes, and lettuce.

"Yes, I'm dying to see her, aren't you?"

"Well, I hope you'll have on decent clothes when you do." Auntie is not one to let things drop.

"Do you know her?" I asked, dodging the brick.

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"No. But I know she's a gentlewoman, gently born and gently bred, and a woman of character, for she has done, I've been told, more war work, and accomplished greater things than any other individual woman in Baltimore. What she will think of such an exhibition of frivolity and bad taste as your appearance, I do not know. Moreover, she's a Southerner and Southerners are not always willing to acknowledge our pretensions to good birth, so for goodness' sake, Lala, try to look like a lady when she arrives."

This was too much. Quite suddenly, I lost my temper.

"Aunt Leonora likes these clothes," I added hotly, "and everybody in New York knows what a well-dressed woman she is. Nobody ever thought she didn't look like a lady"—Aunt Engadine attempted to interrupt here, but I didn't give her a chance—"or that she wasn't patriotic! She chose all my things and some of them are m re—"

Here my godmother succeeded in stemming the flood.

"All I can say is, that your aunt Leonora has shown worse judgment than even I thought her capable of. She needs an operation. Why isn't she in the hospital having it?"

"Operation? There isn't going to be any. Oh, not at all!" I said, calming down suddenly. "Not at all. She isn't having an operation."

"Not having one!" said my aunt, with evident disappointment. "Why not? What is she doing?"

"Standing on her head, in a padded cell," I replied, with a fine sense of climax.

The dramatic effect was all I could desire. "Padded cell," she began, choking with surprise. "Padded—Lala!"

But I was not to taste the full satisfaction the shock I had given her afforded me, for just at that moment we were interrupted in the most unexpected manner. A hand was laid on my shoulder and a well-known voice exclaimed:

"Lala! Well, upon my soul!"

Aunt Engadine and I both turned and there, sure enough, was father. But our gaze did not linger long on him. It riveted itself on the vision by his side. An Egyptian princess, a French diva, a dark-eyed, slyphlike adventuress! Not since I spent three days in Monte Carlo have I seen anything so, well, quite so. She was stunning! An immense hat of black gauze drooped over a pale, but skillfully tinted face and all but concealed the delicately penciled eyes that shone brilliant and languishing above a bewildering arrangement of filmy harem veil. The gown was collarless and waistless and hipless. It undulated; it clung. I stared and then smiled admiringly. My aunt stared and did not smile. She was rigid with passionate disapprobation. And I saw her shudder when my father exclaimed breezily:

"Well, Cammy darling, here's your new sister-in-law. You and she are sure to be great old pals!"

Aunt Engadine has never been to a restaurant since. She has transferred, in some way, the blame for my stepmother and me to them and to aunt Leonora, but is, as one might know she would be, kindness itself to us. And as for aunt Leonora, she feels that the one triumphant exception to the rule that stepmother and stepdaughter do not get along is due to her good offices in procuring for me, in the nick of time, a silhouette.





Who Was Sylvia?

By Arthur Crabb

Author of "Eres," "The Lottery," etc.

FREDERICK HARRISON, eminent lawyer of Alden, and aged very nearly fifty, spent a few days in New York during a certain March. As was his custom on such occasions, he stayed at his club.

When he went downtown on the last day of his visit, he wore a light overcoat, for the day was bright and warm and gave every promise of remaining so. But the day was fickle, as March days are wont to be, and when at six o'clock that evening he approached his club, it was bitterly cold, and he hurried along cresting the raw wind with his head down, his hands in his coat pockets, and his coat wrapped close about him. He had almost arrived when his foot struck something soft and comparatively heavy on the sidewalk. His first impulse was to pass it by, but on second thought he turned quickly and picked it up. It was a small bag such as women carry—larger than a purse, but smaller than any masculine bag. So much Mr. Harrison knew by the sense of touch. He looked about for a possible owner and saw that not only was the street deserted but the houses along it were dark. To commence a search for the owner, then and there, would be futile, and the cold made the thought most unpleasant. Therefore, Mr. Harrison slipped the article into his pocket and went on his way.

Before he reached his club, he met a friend; they went in together, gave their hats and coats to an attendant and—it matters not what they did. It matters only that eventually Mr. Harrison dined, noted the time, ordered his things

packed and a taxicab called. In connection with the former item he asked to have his light overcoat packed and his heavy one left ready for him to wear. This was done, and Mr. Harrison departed for Alden, having forgotten all about the lady's wrist bag which he had found and which reposed safely in his grip.

Two days later, Mr. Harrison discovered the bag in his overcoat pocket. He examined its contents, and immediately sat down in the Orchard Club and wrote to Miss Sylvia Blake in New York:

MISS SYLVIA BLAKE.

DEAR MADAM: I have in my possession a small bag containing several of your cards, which suggest that the bag is yours. I shall be glad to forward it to you if you are, in reality, the owner. Sincerely yours,
FREDERICK HARRISON.

Miss Blake answered promptly in this manner:

MY DEAR MR. HARRISON: So many people carry my cards that I cannot be at all sure that the pocketbook is mine.

If, however, it is a gray-and-blue beaded bag, and if it contains about thirty dollars in bills, some change, a handkerchief with an embroidered S. B., a shopping list, a Yale key, a Dorine, and a newspaper clipping, it probably belongs to me. If you consider this identification sufficient, and decide to let me have it, won't you please retain what you consider to be a proper reward and the amount necessary to cover the cost of forwarding? Sincerely,
SYLVIA BLAKE.

Mr. Harrison at once wrote to Miss Blake:

Your identification is sufficiently accurate to warrant my presuming that you are the legal owner of the beaded bag. It gives me great pleasure to return it to you, carrying charges prepaid.

I suggest that you donate to a worthy charity whatever you consider would have been a proper reward if the bag had been returned to you by a financially embarrassed individual.

It occurs to me that the careless dropping of this bag suggests a lack of responsibility, which is regrettable evidence of the mental condition of many of our young ladies.

P. S.—What is a Dorine?

And forthwith Miss Blake answered:

Please accept my thanks for the return of my bag. The Worthy Charity also extends its thanks to you for your thoughtfulness—and to me for my carelessness.

I wonder if, by any chance, you are related to Miss Caroline Harrison, who, I think, lives on Willow Street, near Orchard, in Alden. I met her some years ago in the South. She was delightful, but so very learned. Her questions were terrifying, while yours—is it possible that you really don't know what a Dorine is? Such ignorance, in these days of unlimited advertising and unrestrained looking-glasses is truly appalling. Only a very young, a very aged, or a very reckless woman omits from her hand bag that first aid to the irradant—a tiny powder puff and powder in a tiny box from Paris. I'm sorry you didn't find mine in the bag, for one learns more from observation than from description, don't you think?

Thanking you again very much for your great kindness to me.

Mr. Harrison considered the advisability of continuing such a flippant correspondence, but he didn't consider long. Little Miss Sylvia amused him and he wrote again:

I have an aunt named Caroline Harrison. I do not find her questions or conversation terrifying, but, of, course, my being a man and old, may account for that. She is perhaps a little more serious than some of our younger generation. She does not, I am sure, find use for a Dorine!

My aunt tells me that she does not recall your name, but I am sure you will forgive her—old ladies are to be forgiven for forgetting youngsters met in the South, aren't they?

I most respectfully suggest that you try, as a substitute for your Dorine, plenty of sleep, plenty of exercise in the open air, and not too much fancy food, especially at odd hours. You will, I am sure, appreciate that advice when you grow up and are more serious than you are now.

At the earliest possible moment Miss Blake answered:

Heaven grant that I never grow up and become serious! Five feet four is a very comfortable height, and life is too solemn a matter to take seriously. Your reference to fancy food puzzles me. Hasn't the joy of simple living penetrated the stronghold of Alden yet? Or would you attribute to me that lack of gastronomic prudence which some of my elders—and supposedly betters—display?

As for sleep, I lie awake nights telling myself that proper young ladies don't correspond with unknown gentlemen. I'm dreadfully exercised over the fact that your aunt Caroline doesn't remember me, for I'd hoped that I might ask where and how you found my purse. If only Miss Harrison had the powder-puff habit, what a bond it would establish! Alas! the Bibles of the intellectual read, "Let your nose so shine before men"—and they are impervious to higher criticism. So I fear that I haven't the shadow of an excuse for troubling you further with my idle chatter.

Mr. Harrison read the letter, read it again, and was a little piqued. It was quite evident that Miss Blake was a lady, however young and frivolous, and it behooves a gentleman to comply with a lady's proper request. Certainly Miss Blake's was suggesting that matters had gone far enough, and that the incident should be closed. On the other hand, Miss Blake was a woman and women's words, written and spoken, are not to be taken literally. It was entirely conceivable that Miss Sylvia would enjoy nothing so much as continuing the correspondence. The solution was quite simple—let Miss Blake stop it herself, if she wished it stopped. Mr. Harrison rather enjoyed it; the society of clever women pleased him greatly, and, though Mr. Harrison never gave it a thought, he pleased many charming women.

Miss Sylvia simply amused Mr. Harrison—a young girl could do no more—but say what you will, a woman unknown possesses a charm that a woman known can never have; it is the lure of uncertainty, the fascination of

mystery, a deceiving thing and fleeting, but nevertheless gripping. Mr. Harrison smiled to himself and called himself an old fool, and went on wondering what sort of a girl Sylvia was. He knew perfectly well that one who writes wittily may be quite dull in conversation. Many a woman may burst into joyous song on paper who, face to face, is unattractive, ill at ease, and entirely without charm. Her physical appearance is too much for her; with that handicap removed, her heart singeth! Mr. Harrison declined to believe that any such condition existed. He liked to picture Sylvia as twenty-two or three, dark, not quite slender, her vivacity well controlled, her color high, her eyes bright, her mouth a little large, but very sweet. He saw no reason why, there in the quiet of the Orchard Club, with his day's work done, he should not chat with such a child as his fancy painted. Mr. Harrison, great lawyer, man of affairs, and with a very stolid, old heart, really had, down underneath, a bit of romance in him.

Mr. Harrison was sure that there could be no harm in writing to Sylvia, and he immediately did so, complaining bitterly of her hint that their brief association should come to an end forthwith. This time he wrote a letter, a long, amusing epistle, begging charity from her, with laughter in the words, and laying before her the spectacle of his loneliness, his sadness, and his melancholy, in such tragic vein that Sylvia must have been convulsed with laughter or reduced to tears—depending on whether or not she believed him.

Sylvia replied, which proved that Mr. Harrison had been quite right in not placing faith in her plea for the proprieties. She accepted, without question, his portrayal of his hard lot, and told him that it was entirely his own fault. She chided him for remaining single, scolded him for his selfishness, derided the complete luxury with which

he lived, and made fun of him generally.

That was much to Mr. Harrison's liking, for Sylvia showed a keen insight and a broad mind. His vision of her began to be convincing—certainly she could not be a mouse-like, drab little person. Also, he added a few years to her age. He wrote as she had written, attempting an analysis of her character, her mode of living, her appearance, and her views on life in general, treating them all with a light and satirical touch, and, in truth, making the whole thing a treatise on a presumed frivolity in all young society women of the day.

Sylvia denied both his criticism and his compliments, told him that she was an extremely serious woman, and challenged him to refute her straightforward statement regarding his own character. This Mr. Harrison did, and it amused him to use very long words, the meaning of which few young women would know. He brought to bear upon her all the logic of his finely trained mind, and made many statements that were most illogical, if Sylvia could but discover it!

Sylvia brushed aside the chaff and took unto herself only the good grain of Mr. Harrison's letters. At times, Mr. Harrison came close to redrawing his picture of her, and adding many years to her age, for such thoughts as hers, such insight, such keen perception, could hardly exist in a girl of twenty-two. And yet there was youth—the happy, carefree laughter of youth—in Sylvia's letters.

By the time spring had passed into summer, Mr. Harrison was still further convinced that he was entirely an old fool, for he looked forward to Sylvia's letters as to nothing else. They took precedence over his dinner, his sleep, his business, his golf, and his friends. They were his most precious possession. When one arrived, he often carried it

about with him for hours, knowing that it would lose none of its charm, and reveling the while in that most subtle joy—anticipation.

It was not until summer was well upon them that the first open and above-board, serious note was struck. Imagine a long-distance conversation, such as this, by letter!

"So you are in Newport?"

"Yes, but not the Newport of the limelight. And you are in Saunders-town? I went up on a hill and looked across the bay, but I could not see you—at least, I could not be sure of you in the crowds—even with grandfather's telescope. I am going to the Pier some day next week—perhaps I shall see you then, as I go through."

"I'm awfully sorry, but I'm driving up to Providence that day for golf."

"Why don't you go some other day?"

"Because I am afraid that you might see me, and——"

"But I should love to see you. Why don't you come over here, say to lunch, some day?"

"Because I am in love with the woman who writes to me and I would not lose her."

"But, silly, you would find her!"

"And she would find an old man, and would be very sweet to him, but a little bored, and if, after that, he ever had any letters from her, he would know that they were written as—well, suppose we say, a duty."

"Suppose we do say 'a duty,' and I'll promise you that when writing to you becomes a duty, there won't be any writing. Still, I think that you are right. How many people we know and how casually we regard most of them—and how seldom does a friendship such as ours exist! It is better not to disturb it—better not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. What an awful way to put it, even if you are an old goose! I wonder whether, if we should meet,

unidentified, we would know each other!"

"I doubt it!"

"You do not doubt it! I am sure I should know you if I heard you speak!"

"I think that I should not even have to hear you speak!"

It took all summer to hold that conversation. The early fall found them back in their cities, each hammering at the problem that confronted him. "If we should meet, what then?"

Sylvia was unafraid, and Mr. Harrison said that it was because she had nothing to lose.

"Wise old man," she wrote, "wiser than any man ever was before, you are perfectly silly! Have you no faith in yourself—or me?"

Sylvia had grown—grown! She was no longer a child, but a mature woman!

Winter came, and Christmas was in the air. Mr. Harrison spoke of it, and with perfect innocence, and in the spirit of levity, wrote of the absence of his aunt in California, of the fact that he was an orphan without brothers or sisters, and that his few cousins were so far removed from him, both geographically and in relationship, as to be of no use to him. He pictured the day as he would spend it at the Orchard Club, he and two or three other sad old men, each with a tear or two in his eyes.

Mr. Harrison, for the sake of his humor, thought nothing of the fib he told Sylvia. True, he had no relatives but his aunt—for which fact he thanked God—but he had friends innumerable to whom no greater pleasure could come than to have him with them at Christmas. Many a child who knew nothing of Mr. Harrison's great mind, had an intimate knowledge of his great heart.

Imagine Mr. Harrison's astonishment when he discovered that he had written more convincingly than he knew! Sylvia said simply: "Come to us." Later

on, she went into details, describing her plans for the day, telling of the hosts of men, women, and children in her family, and how nicely Mr. Harrison would fit in with them all.

"Do come," she wrote, and Mr. Harrison could hear the plea of her voice, and see her eyes imploring him. "Come the day before Christmas, and I'll take you for a ride up the Hudson, or wherever you want to go, and you can take me to the theater in the evening. You can sleep late at your club or your hotel Christmas day, or at our house, if you prefer, for there is plenty of room. We have a huge family dinner at two o'clock, and pass the afternoon somehow or other till dark, when we have tea. Perhaps I can make Uncle Ben let you be Santa Claus, if you want to very much.

"Just think of the stories we have all read of how some good, bad, or indifferent person has felt terribly guilty at Christmas and, overcome by the spirit of the day, has gone out into the world and left a ton or so of Christmas food and Christmas cheer at every door in the poor parts of New York, and perhaps Brooklyn, too; or how he has found a tramp on a bench in Madison Square, or a poor little shivering waif selling matches in the snow, or a boyhood friend down and out in the hospital, and how he changes their whole existence for ever and ever. Of course, a woman can't do these things—except in a most impersonal way, in connection with cut-and-dried charity organizations, and perhaps with the washer-woman's family that she has known for years—so you're my only chance, my only hope!

"Think of it, a perfectly respectable down-and-outer like you, with two big tears streaming down your cheeks, who can come—you, not the tears, of course—right into the house, and behave perfectly properly, and not be the least trouble or bother, and who

will probably bring me some lovely monogrammed cigarettes, and will play checkers or chess or piquet with father—and take me to the theater. You simply must come!"

Mr. Harrison laughed, and the laugh died away and left him standing at a window through which he could have seen the evening throng going homeward along Orchard Street, but through which he saw nothing at all but a brown-eyed girl who was not a girl at all, but a woman—a woman who had become the all-controlling influence of his life. That fact was clear, and must be faced. Perhaps the spirit of Christmas, permeating the air all about, was too strong even for Mr. Harrison! He knew that sooner or later the mask must be dropped, and that he must put himself to the test.

But Christmas! Surely that was not the time for a stranger to enter Sylvia's house.

Mr. Harrison, standing at the window, imagined that he was considering the matter of Christmas seriously, whereas he was considering nothing whatever but the face of Sylvia. He remembered that something in Sylvia's letter had annoyed him; he could not recall what it was, and read the letter again. He found it easily enough—it was the monogrammed cigarettes. Mr. Harrison wrote a telegram to Sylvia and dispatched it.

"Do you smoke cigarettes?" it read. The answer came before Mr. Harrison had finished dinner.

"Only when they bear my monogram, and are presents from old gentlemen coming to spend Christmas with me and mine! I am writing to-night." The telegram was signed "Sylvia." Never before, in any message to Mr. Harrison, had that name appeared alone.

The next morning Mr. Harrison knew very well that he was an old fool, not only to have interest at all in a young chit that he had never seen, but

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to think, for a minute, that he might have any interest in her after he had seen her. Imagine arriving at a strange house, the guest of an insignificant, uninteresting, and extremely plain child, who, having no romance in her everyday life, had cooked up one, as a child will, dreaming all sorts of make-believe things.

No, sir! Mr. Harrison was not that sort of an old fool—he'd stay where he belonged! And he stuck to his resolution all day long, and that night sat down to write Sylvia all about it, making his refusal just as kind and gentle as he possibly could. Sylvia's promised letter had not come. Mr. Harrison took a long time over his letter, but finally it was finished and sealed and stamped, and he walked with it to the club post box. He held it at the slot for a moment, and then put it in his pocket, went into the living room, and sat down before the wood fire. An hour later, he dropped the letter—stamp, envelope, and all—into the flames, and watched it curl up into black ash and finally crumble and disappear—and just at that moment a boy brought Sylvia's letter to him.

Mr. Harrison held it in his fingers a long time before he read it, and he sat perfectly still for a long time after he had read it. It said, in part:

"If you have faith in me, you will not be afraid to come. You will, too, come because I ask it. Our friendship must be a poor thing and not worth continuing if it will not stand the light."

Mr. Harrison, late that night, wrote to Sylvia that he would arrive promptly at two o'clock on the day before Christmas, and asked her to obtain tickets for such play as she might select.

Promptly on the minute, Mr. Harrison entered Sylvia's house, and the maid promised him that Miss Sylvia would be down at once. Sylvia came, went straight to Mr. Harrison, and held out her hand to him.

"Goodness gracious—you are old after all, aren't you?" she cried.

"Very, very old," Mr. Harrison said. "I told you so!"

"But I thought you were joking. I didn't think an old man would take all that trouble to write letters to a child. You did call me 'my dear child' once, you know."

Sylvia was a child, albeit a large one, and surely not over twenty. She was tall, not quite slender, and very dark, and her skin was creamy and rosy and very beautiful. Her eyes were brown and large, and no girl ever had such eyes who was not a very nice girl indeed. Her mouth was a trifle large and somewhat prim, but her smile was glorious to behold! She was quite as beautiful as Mr. Harrison had dared dream, and she was even more substantial and charming. Certainly Sylvia was not an insignificant little thing!

They talked for a few minutes before Sylvia mentioned their ride, and then agreed that the day was perfect. They went up the Hudson, as Sylvia had said they would, and the girl chatted merrily. It was very pleasant for Mr. Harrison to listen to her. She was very modest and very sweet, simplicity itself. She apologized for calling him an old man—of course, he wasn't old, just older than she was. She was very respectful, which is delightful to older folk, if the respect be not assumed. Before they turned for home Mr. Harrison was quite sure that he could never have pieced together, in his imagination, a young woman nearly so attractive, and who so entirely satisfied his ideals of young womanhood as Sylvia did.

They returned at five o'clock, and Sylvia suggested tea, and they sat down to it, and ate and drank almost in silence.

"Please smoke," Sylvia said.

"Thank you, I will," said Mr. Harrison, sinking back comfortably in his

chair. "Well, well," he said, "this is very nice—and very strange indeed!"

"Isn't it?" said Sylvia. "But I knew you would be awfully nice! Only a very nice man could possibly write such wonderful letters as yours!"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mr. Harrison. "Don't think that you can pull wool over my eyes as you do over young men's! I'm a very wise old man!"

"Do you like me?" Sylvia asked. "I like you very much, as you well know," said Mr. Harrison.

"Of course, you'd say that! I mean, am I just what you expected to find, or am I very different?"

Mr. Harrison smiled and gazed straight into Sylvia's eyes. "*You are not Sylvia*," he said quietly.

"What! I am not Sylvia? What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are not the Sylvia who has been writing to me!"

"What absolute nonsense!" she exclaimed. "If I am not, who *am* I?"

"That I do not know—but you are not *the* Sylvia!"

She knew by Mr. Harrison's voice that it was useless to argue. He spoke with a conviction that nothing could shake.

"You *are* wise—very, very wise, aren't you?" she said.

"Then I am right?"

Sylvia in answer, rang a bell, and to the responding maid she said, "Will you please ask Miss Blake if she will have tea?"

Mr. Harrison smiled, his eyes searching Sylvia's.

"Well?" he said.

"Miss Sylvia Blake will be here in a minute, I think," and Sylvia smiled. "How did you know?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Mr. Harrison said.

"I am Sylvia Blake."

"Undoubtedly," he said. At that moment there came into the room a

lady whose hair was white. She walked straight to Mr. Harrison.

"Well," she said, "so you're Frederick Harrison?"

"I am," said Mr. Harrison.

"I'm glad you're here, and I hope you are glad to be here! I'm Sylvia Blake—Miss Sylvia Blake—and this is my grandniece. I hope you like her. I had business that needed attending to this afternoon, and she offered to take care of you. I hope she did it well. Did you, my dear?"

"She did—most excellently," said Mr. Harrison.

"Good! And we can't blame her if she would have her little joke, can we?"

"I think," said Mr. Harrison, "that the joke was——"

"—on me! I suppose it was—but I don't see yet how you guessed!" Sylvia said.

"I didn't guess," said Mr. Harrison.

"He's awfully wise, aunty!"

"That's not important—what is important is that we're going to have an outsider here to-morrow, to break up the awful monotony of Blake & Blake connections! I am undoubtedly a traitor to the family, but there is such a thing as too much family. You're going to take me to the theater to-night, I believe. I'd like another cup of tea, Sylvia, if you please—strong. I shall have to stay awake. I'm not used to going to the theater with young men. From your letters, I believed you to be at least as old as I am."

"Have you the tickets?" Mr. Harrison asked.

"I have. You don't suppose I'd forget them, do you, the first time I've had a beau in twenty years? Please get them, Sylvia, my dear. They are in my blue bead bag on the hall table." Then to Mr. Harrison, "They're five dollars—you can pay me for them now, and that embarrassing incident will be closed. Did you bring my cigarettes,

or should I wait for Christmas to find out?"

"I didn't bring any cigarettes, I am sorry to say," Mr. Harrison explained.

"Why not? Are you one of those narrow-minded men who object to women smoking? I'd like to know what right you have to criticize what I do. I consider your telegram distinctly a criticism. Here are the tickets."

Sylvia had brought the blue bead bag, and from it Miss Blake took the tickets and handed them to Mr. Harrison. Then from the bag she took a tiny powder puff, and deftly touched both sides of her nose with it.

"Only a very young or a very old woman or a very reckless one omits—omits this—er—savior of radiant noses. I am still middle-aged," said Miss Blake, glaring at Mr. Harrison, as though she dared him to deny it.

Mr. Harrison did not deny it but smiled at Miss Blake. "Some of us," he said, "are blessed with everlasting youth—and youth often overstays its welcome. I must run along. About eight?"

"I shall be ready at eight, and I'll furnish the car, if you please. Shall I send it for you?"

Mr. Harrison said that that was not necessary. Sylvia walked to the door with him.

"Auntie is a dear, isn't she?" she said.

"Auntie is a great deal more than that; in fact, all the Blakes are more than that!"

"I like you a lot, too—even if I am not 'Sylvia,'" the girl said, and she laughed as she closed the door.

Mr. Harrison took Sylvia, the elder, to the theater. During the evening Miss Blake dropped some of her banter and was a very charming and very witty old lady. They said good night at the Blake front door.

"I have not enjoyed an evening so much in years," Mr. Harrison said.

"The play was excellent," said Miss Blake.

"The play had nothing to do with it."

"Very pretty, I'm sure," exclaimed Miss Blake, "but I should think you'd be ashamed to try to turn an old woman's head with silly speeches."

"And I should think that you would be ashamed to try to deceive such a very young man! You are not Sylvia."

"I not Sylvia Blake—what do you mean, sir!"

"I mean that you and your niece—but you know very well what I mean."

"H'm—so—regular smart Aleck, aren't you? Dinner is at two to-morrow, don't forget; and come before then if you can, say at one, and see the babies," and she shut the door unceremoniously on Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Harrison walked slowly to his club and slowly removed his hat and overcoat. Surely this was a most curious affair. "There is no fool like an old one," thought he. Even if he were not a fool to begin with, they were making a fool of him. They looked upon the whole thing as a joke—a sort of polite adventure; they were making game of him, and Mr. Harrison was in no frame of mind to be made fun of. He had come to New York to see Sylvia, not just a woman named "Sylvia," but the Sylvia who had twined herself about him, who had placed herself in his heart, a woman whose voice he had heard speaking to him, in whose eyes he had seen what he had never seen in any other woman's eyes—that which makes life worth living.

He had come for her—as he knew that he must come sooner or later—whether she was a child or not, but he knew that if she was a child she was, too, a very wonderful woman. She had sent for him; she had had the courage to brave calamity for the sake of the greater thing; she had been brave when he had wavered; she had sent for

him and when he came, she had disappeared.

Had her courage failed her at the last minute, or had she been playing with him? It looked as though she had been making sport of him, for she had had two Sylvias waiting for him—two Sylvias who knew the story of the blue bead bag, and made light of it. "Sylvia" should not have done that. "Why not?" Mr. Harrison asked himself—the incident of the bag was nothing—the world might know the whole of it—it was what came after that the world should not know—and the world did not know. Neither Sylvia, the elder, nor Sylvia, the younger, knew what had been in the letters written after the bag had become a dead issue.

Mr. Harrison had not thought of that before; a word or two with each Sylvia had been enough to make him know that neither was *Sylvia*. It never occurred to him that either might prove him wrong by speaking of things which only he and "Sylvia" knew. His faith in his own judgment was too strong for him even to think of such a possibility.

"But who is 'Sylvia'?" Mr. Harrison, alone on Christmas Eve in his club, asked himself that question over and over again. Before he went to bed, his mind was at peace.

"'Sylvia' is somewhere—she has not lost her courage—she will not let me go away without seeing her, and when I see her I shall know her! There is nothing for me to do but to let affairs shape themselves, to let this curious adventure take its own course."

On the following day Mr. Harrison reached the Blakes' at one o'clock. The house was filled with the shouts and laughter of children. Through the doorway he saw many older people watching with careful eyes the behavior of those youngsters for whom they were responsible.

Sylvia, the younger, greeted him.

"They are just going to dinner," she said, and as she spoke, some sort of a line was formed and aimed in the direction of the dining room—a line that ascended from a young man and woman who were not quite sure of their equilibrium, to the last couple, who did not entirely approve of the ceremony, believing it a bit childish. Finally, the procession was under way and Sylvia and Mr. Harrison followed on.

Then Sylvia introduced Mr. Harrison to all the fathers and mothers and aunts and uncles. "Sylvia" was not among them. They were well-bred people, well-versed in hospitality. No word too much was said in greeting, but just enough to say that he was welcome. There was no suggestion that he was a stranger—brought among them by a strange adventure; they showed no curiosity, cast no examining glances. One by one, Mr. Harrison met the Blake women, and knew that he had not met "Sylvia."

He talked with Sylvia, the elder, who told him who every one was, and who said pointed things about them that had, however, no sting. She left him to help some small damsel in distress and, the damsel rescued, she slipped back and stood in the doorway. A man spoke to Mr. Harrison, and they were talking when he heard a voice that came from the next room. He saw Miss Blake turn and heard her call:

"It's in the upstairs library, I think. Hurry up! We're going in to dinner."

The voice answered. "All right. I'll see if I can find it."

For an instant, Mr. Harrison did not move; his hands closed tight, and he felt the blood rush to his face. He experienced the sensation of a schoolboy meeting his first love. Mr. Harrison walked past Miss Blake, and across the room toward another, beyond which he knew the stairs lay. On the stairs he heard a woman's steps above him and the rustle of her skirts. He went

up and turned to the right as the woman had done, and he came to the library. The woman was searching among a pile of Christmas presents on a table. She heard him, and without looking around she said, "Paul!" Mr. Harrison did not answer, and she turned.

"Why! You are Mr. Harrison, of course," she said.

Still Mr. Harrison did not speak, but he walked toward her, and the woman faced him.

"You are 'Sylvia,'" he said.

Then she laughed. "No, I am Edith—Sylvia's mother."

"You are 'Sylvia'—the Sylvia I came to——"

The woman's brown eyes felt; her fingers ran along the table's edges till they found a fringe and twisted it.

"How do you know?" she asked, her voice hardly above a whisper.

"I cannot tell—your voice, your eyes perhaps."

She glanced up at him. "You are a very wise man, if that is all," she said.

"It is not all—but your voice was enough. And now——"

"—and now the mist has risen, and our little romance is ended."

He shook his head. "It has just begun. Are you willing that it should go steadily onward—forever?"

"Are you quite sure—can you be sure—that you want it to go on—forever?"

"I have never been so sure of anything. It must be so."

"Yes," she said, "I think it must be so," and she smiled at Mr. Harrison.

They were still by the table in the library upstairs.

"Do you remember Christmas day, twelve years ago?" Edith asked. Mr. Harrison tried vainly to recall that

Christmas Day. "Do you remember a little girl who fell on a slippery pavement and hurt herself, in Tarrytown, and a man who picked her up and carried her home to her mother, and who stayed and helped till the doctor came? Sylvia has changed a lot since then."

"Well, well—can that be?" said Mr. Harrison.

"The man forgot—the mother remembered. And then one day last March, I heard that same man address the jury in the famous case of Adams against the Alden & Western Railroad. My brother was counsel for Adams and he told me that the man would be worth hearing. He was. It seemed as though he were telling me a story, just as he had told my Sylvia a story before the doctor came. I left the courtroom and met Aunt Sylvia, and we came home and it was then that Aunt Sylvia dropped her bag. Then your letter came. Aunt Sylvia's eyes were being fixed up and she couldn't use them, so I wrote her letters for her, and I kept on and on, and they laughed at me. They brought your letters to me and called me 'Sylvia,' but they never knew what was in them—after the first. And yesterday morning I—well I had to go away, and our two precious Sylvias took matters into their own hands and——"

"Mother—mother! Aren't you ever coming down?"

"Yes, Sylvia, we are coming." And then, "Do you feel like one of the family now, Frederick, and not like a stranger rescued from a park bench?"

"Somehow, I feel entirely at home," Frederick said.

"Isn't that nice! Christmas really is a family day!" She smiled at him and took his arm, and in that fashion they went down to Christmas dinner.





The Gladiator

By H. C. Bailey

THE slaves moved about the couches with goblets of honeyed wine. Glabrio in the middle, the fat host, drank and shone. The guest on his right, a dark, merry fellow, was busy with the breast of a peacock. The other man helped himself, from the panniers of the silver mule on the table, to black and white olives, and looked out across the cedar wood and tortoise shell and gold to the violet sea and the sunset.

"By Pollux," said Glabrio in an unctuous voice, "you neither eat nor drink, Cæsar. One of these mullets? The loin of the bear? Come, man, a sucking pig at least?"

"You are the most splendid of hosts, my dear Glabrio. Your only fault is that in your house a man can never get anything to eat."

"Nothing to eat?" Glabrio's jaw fell as he looked at mullets and eels, hares and peacock, boar and sow.

"Or drink, either. If I might have some bread, and nothing but snow."

Glabrio roared at his slaves.

"Pray do not scold the lads, my friend," Cæsar drawled. "They have offered me everything that is richest. And how could they honor me more than by supposing your tastes are mine?"

"You flatter me, Cæsar. You make me proud, by Hercules!"

Cæsar bowed to him and ate the bread. The third man, Cœlius, who was now at a jelly of eels, laughed at him. "What a Stoic you are, Caius!"

"My dear Marcus! I detest the gloomy tribe. I am a sworn Epicurean. I live for pleasure."

"I can give it you," Glabrio chuckled. "I'll show you a Venus to-night. And a Venus taught by the Muses! She sings like a siren. She dances like the nymphs. You shall see her veiled and unveiled—alabaster!"

"Our Glabrio becomes a poet," said Cæsar, and took a quince stuffed with almonds.

White slaves and black bore the dishes out. From the ceiling came down a silver hoop hung with sweetmeats and fruits. Golden lamps shone on the tables, on the mounds of snow, on the scented steam hissing from the urn which stood by the golden goblets.

"Gods, who can drink hot on such a night?" said Cœlius.

"Well, it gives a man heart," chuckled Glabrio, who was shining now more than ever. "And you'll like the scent, I think. Why, Cæsar, you are drinking nothing but snow."

"I do not want a heart, my friend."

"By Pollux, you must see my Zoe." Glabrio clapped his hands.

Flute-playing girls came in and with them a girl who walked with her hands clasped behind her, her head bowed, her eyes cast down. She was all that is demure. But her bosom beat high and fast. Her little feet were bare, her arms bare, too, and the simple white robe she wore clung closely to a body of rich but slender fashioning. About her wrists were little garlands of red roses, and white roses were bound in her black hair.

"Hither, darling," said Glabrio, and when she stood before him put out a fat arm and lifted her head. She showed a face of Greek perfection,

flushed, smiling, but with a strange mockery. "In spirits to-night? A good girl now, eh?" He patted her. "Show us your best." And he turned, grinning, to Cæsar. "Well, is she not a prize? I paid two hundred thousand sesterces for her, and Dromo warrants her in her teens and of the best Athenian breed. She looks it, and, immortal gods, she ought to be, for two hundred thousand sesterces."

Cælius laughed and held out his goblet to the girl, who bowed low and drew back.

"Whom does your smile mock, child?" said Cæsar, in Greek.

"I do not understand, sir," she said, looked at him full a moment, and bent her head again.

"Come, dance, dance," Glabrio cried. "What will you dance, Zoe?"

"I will dance Andromeda," she said.

The flutes began to mourn and she cast herself on the ground. She lay quivering, contorted, then dragged herself up and slowly, bent, faltering, moved with gestures of distress across the room to fling herself against the wall as if she were crucified. There she stood, the shape of her body in relief against the crimson marble, her white arms spread rigid, her head drooping like a broken flower, her bosom shaking. She looked up. Again they saw that strange smile, but now it was bolder. Her arms moved, moved slowly, and then with a start of surprise at finding themselves free. Slowly, shyly, she stepped forward and then, as the music changed its mode, she broke into a wild dance of joy and triumph, and whirled out of the room.

Cælius applauded. Cæsar turned on his couch. "But she has a soul, my good Glabrio," he said in a tone of surprise.

"A queer dance. I do not care for it. It does not warm a man," Glabrio said and called out. "Zoe! You have not pleased. Dance your unveiling."

Slowly Cæsar let down his long legs from the couch, stood up, and arranged his toga elaborately.

"My dear friend!" Glabrio was distressed. "You do not find this tedious? I promise you she is a very goddess. A Venus of Praxiteles, and of a blushing life!"

"The goddesses do not unveil in this world. Not she, but you, will unveil. And you are not interesting, my Glabrio."

"I? I dance? Gods, this is an ugly jest, Cæsar! I am a knight!"

"The knight and the goddess!" Cælius laughed.

Cæsar looked down at the purple stripe of his toga and arranged it again and turned away to the window. But as he turned, there was a scream, a scurry of feet, and loud talking.

"Arms!" Cælius cried. "I swear I heard the clash of arms. What, my Glabrio, is there civil war in your republic? Are the slaves in revolt? Oh, havoc!"

"Cælius! But you are jesting. Gods, but there is certainly a great noise!" Glabrio stammered. "Glaucus! Glaucus, I say!" His freedman came running in. "What is the matter there?" The man was out of breath. "Why—why do you let us be disturbed, sirrah?"

"It is Zoe, my master," Glaucus gulped. "It is Zoe. She has been carried off."

Cæsar turned from the window to look at him.

"Yes, she has been carried off. I swear that I was not to blame. I was in the library working at your accounts. When I came, she was already gone. But I have discovered everything. There was a man came to the door and talked with the ostiarius, a big man and with a yellow beard. He talked very bad Latin and the ostiarius could not understand what he wanted.

When Zoe came out from your presence, she sat down there in the hall. She was out of breath, she said to the flute girls, and when this man saw her, he broke past the ostiarius and caught her and dragged her away. The ostiarius would not let him pass, held him, shouted for help. But he has cut down the ostiarius and he has gone."

"Immortal gods! What an outrage! What times we live in! Am I not safe in my own villa? Are my slaves cowards, then? Rascal! She cost me two hundred thousand sesterces."

"Alas! master, I know it well."

Cæsar turned away and after a moment stepped through the window into the dark.

"Who is this man then, the ostiarius, too, a stout fellow worth fifty thousand still. Who is this man that destroys my household?"

"Perseus," Coelius said with a laugh. "Andromeda has found her deliverer, my Glabrio. And you, well, I suppose you are the monster who would have eaten her. Now all the parts are cast. Only you must be turned to stone. Do you feel the petrification, my Glabrio?"

"Oh, trifler!" Glabrio roared. "Is this a time for my friends to jest? Arm all my slaves, Glaucus. Bid them out and after him. By Hercules, he is but one man, is he not, and they are many! Fifty sesterces for the slave who brings her back!"

"Certainly, my master, instantly. But—but they think he is a gladiator—one of the escaped gladiators."

"Gods, are they not all slain? Crassus crucified a thousand last week."

"Some lurk on the mountain, it is said."

"What times we live in! The republic is a den of wolves! Send to the camp—no, I will write to the legatus myself. Go, arm the slaves, send them out to follow. Heaven! They can track the scoundrel at least, cowards

that they are." Glabrio heaved himself up and bustled out.

Cœlius lay back laughing. "Who says our Glabrio is a bore? Eh, Caius? What! Where have you gone to?" He saw a still white figure in the gloom outside. "Why, are you become a statue for Glabrio's terrace?"

Cæsar stood in the shadows of the house, looking out across the moonlit garden and beyond to the scarp of Vesuvius rising clear and sharp out to the cone. There was no smoke or fire in that century. Chattering slaves poured out of the house, and the garden was lit with their torches as they beat to and fro, but not far.

"How now, man?" Coelius jogged his arm. "Have you seen a nymph?"

"What does one see of nights? Whatever gods there are."

"Oh, if you philosophize! By Pol-lux, is that a god? Look! look! Black against the moonlight, a heavy shape toiled up. 'It is the gladiator carrying off his wench! Ho, Glabrio—' Caesar's hand covered his mouth.

"Speak good words, Marcus. Perhaps it is a god."

"What?" Coelius burst out laughing, "Caius, you are a villain! You knew! You—"

"By the immortal gods, I swear I know nothing! Go in, go in! This night, at least, is theirs."

II.

If you want to turn up the date, it is just after the death of Spartacus, Spartacus the First. His revolt of the slaves and the gladiators was crushed, and groves of crucifixions lined the highroad. There were still men in arms who had neither hope nor fear. Politicians might use the turmoil to arrange the assassination of a rival. Therefore Cæsar traveled with an escort. But a mile gone from Glabrio's

villa, he bade it ride on and set his horse to the mountainside.

Cœlius was taken by surprise. "Pray, how long have you had this in your head? You are the most bewildering of men, Caius!"

"Forgive me! I thought you also were interested. But do not let me give you a tedious day. Ride on and I will join you at Baize to-night."

"Tedious! No, Caius, I do not think your day will be tedious. Many thanks, but I will not leave you to go hunting the wolves of Spartacus alone."

"My dear Marcus! Well, I think it will be amusing!"

"Oh, I suppose you will talk philosophy to the gentleman."

"I should be delighted. He would give us some living thoughts, our—what is he, Marcus? Will you wager? Thracian or Gaul?"

"More likely a mongrel Roman. You are a dreamer, Caius. I will make you a wager. Either the fellow will lurk in his hole till we are tired of beating the mountain, or he will out upon us and cut our throats."

"I permit no man to cut my throat till I am ready. And I am not ready yet. There are several things I have not done; for one, to talk to this gentleman with the yellow beard. He has many things to tell me; what he lives for, what he would die for."

That prophecy was hardly spoken before they remarked a man above them making signs. He was a big fellow, and wore mail on body and arms. With some vehemence he was directing them to turn back.

"A gladiator, sure enough," said Cœlius, "and a gladiator who does not want to fight. By Pollux, there are always plenty of them."

"If I were a gladiator I should not want to fight," said Cæsar, and rode straight at the man. As they came nearer, he shouted to them to turn, to leave the mountain, to go home. Cæsar

held right on as if he would ride over him.

At the last moment the man sprang aside him cursing, yelling, "Are you mad?"

"Sir, I shall be glad of your opinion," Cæsar said.

He followed upon their heels. In a little while they came upon broken, rocky ground and out of the rocks half a score of men sprang up, seized their horses' heads, and, clamoring, made them dismount.

"Gentlemen, you are too kind," said Cæsar.

But some of them cried out, "Kill, kill!"

"All in good time. The games are only begun. I have an errand to a friend of mine—to him who took a woman from Glabrio."

"He calls me friend. What Roman calls me friend? Let me see him." Thrusting his comrades aside the man with the yellow beard stood before Cæsar. He wore full armor and a massive helmet wrought over his brow into the shape of a fish. He was a big man, taller than Cæsar by a head, broad of shoulder and brawny, but agile rather than heavy. "What do you seek of me, Roman?" he said in his halting Latin. "I am Cunoval."

"Caius Cæsar salutes you!" Cæsar raised his right arm. "A citizen of Rome, as you say. And you, sir, are you a Gaul?"

"No, by the gods, a Briton."

"I must come to your island some day, Cunoval. It breeds men. Well, will you walk apart?"

"No. No secrets. All are equal here."

"A republic? Again I congratulate you."

"But I am chief."

"An admirable republic," Cæsar laughed. "So then, Cunoval the chief, was it worth while?"

"You talk dark words, Roman."

"Is there no light under that helmet, Briton? You make a cunning enemy, you rouse the hunt against your band again, and for what? For a little Greek girl. Was it worth while?"

"That is the voice of a slave. Yes, Roman, if I die in torments this day, it was worth while."

"You are young, Briton, and a Roman is old. What is she then, this Greek dancing girl, to the swordsman from the rim of the world?"

"Roman slave! What is my woman to you?"

"What you are, Cunoval. A rare thing which I do not know. And she, born to baths and perfumes and Eastern fabrics, will she live like a fox in a hole and die like a fox in a trap for a barbarian, my Cunoval?"

"She is happy, Roman. Go, then. Go! What have you to offer us? Go!"

"Life. Is it a little thing, Cunoval, to her or to you? I offer life."

"What life is there in Rome? The life of a slave, of a beast; fight for your pleasure, be the toy of your pleasures, die, at last, for your pleasure. I live free. I die as I choose."

"Cunoval! The cavalry! The cavalry!" It was the man on watch who raised the shout. They scrambled up on the rocks to look. There was no doubt. Some troops of cavalry were riding in open order across the lower slopes.

"They come, then," Cunoval muttered to himself and called, "Zoe!"

The girl came tripping over the stones. "By Pollux, she is like a flower," Caesar said. "A lily of the rocks!" She was white, her great eyes dark with fear, but still she had that strange, faint, mocking smile.

"It is the end, Zoe," Cunoval said, and clasped her to his side, a little, frail creature against his big frame.

Cæsar laughed. "Children you are. Hear me, then, my children. You are in my hand. But I had not sought

you out if I had nothing for you but the crucifixion. I give games this year in Rome. I have my school of gladiators in Capua. There is room in it for such as you. And there, you wipe out your past. No man dares anything against Cæsar's men. Will you follow me?"

"Will they follow?" Cælius laughed. "Who chooses to be crucified?"

"What surety is there?" one of them called out.

"I am Cæsar."

"Cowards!" Cunoval shouted. "The training school, the arena, slavery! Fight it out here, and here die!"

But he could not command them. He saw it, and cursing them in his own language, suddenly he flung the girl from him, drew his sword, and sprang at Cæsar.

It was he whom Cæsar had been watching. Cæsar caught the arm which held the sword, grappled, turned and checked, but could not stay the blow, and went down under it. Down they went both, and Cælius flung himself upon them crying, "Pull the mad-man off, lads, or he will send you all to the cross."

Whatever moved them, fear of the coming cavalry and the death of the crucified, or some obedience to the man who was Cæsar, they answered the call. Cunoval was dragged off and held helpless on the ground beneath the weight of his comrades. Cæsar stood up, wiped the blood from his head and bound it, and carefully put on his hat to hide the bandage. He dusted himself delicately and arranged and rearranged his cloak. Then, like one of the audience in an amphitheater, he made, with his thumb, the sign to spare a fallen gladiator's life. The gladiators roared laughter.

"Bind him," Cæsar said. "Bind also the girl."

Though Cunoval fought with two men's strength, bound he was, and the

girl gave her hands to be bound. Neither he nor she spoke.

"Where is your den, Briton?" Caesar strode across the rocks. "Yes, that will serve. Let them lie there." Into the low cave man and woman were thrust. "So. Roll that stone to the mouth. Fall in, in file. March!"

No man of them hesitated. Cunoval wanted to die. They did not. The Roman was master. Down the mountainside they went. "So much for your philosophy," said Cœlius. "You have got nothing by it but a headache, which is all a man can get, I think. Confess, Caius, your barbarian was a dull fellow."

"He has something which I have not—faith."

"Faith? Faith in what?"

"In freedom."

Cœlius laughed. "He will be wiser before he dies."

The cavalry cried a challenge. Caesar rode forward. "The legatus?"

"See where he comes."

"I am Caius Caesar." The legatus saluted. "I have here a band of gladiators whom I have enrolled for the games I give at Rome. I take them now to my school at Capua."

"They are assuredly of the rebels, Caesar."

"Assuredly. But from me they will not rebel. They will amuse Rome better fighting than crucified."

"We are seeking a rascal who stole a woman slave from Glabrio."

"By Pollux, these have no women among them. Search them!" The legatus laughed. "Farewell, friend. Tell your general that Caesar salutes Marcus Crassus and has spared him some trouble."

III.

Cavalry, scouring the mountain, did not find the two in the cave. Who could expect that living creatures had gone in where a rock hid the mouth?

In vain Cunoval writhed against the thongs that bound him, and sweated and cursed. The woman lay still and sometimes spoke his name softly, and when he was weary she rolled close to him and gave her breast to his head. "Sleep," she said, "sleep."

"We shall sleep long enough soon."

"Sleep is good," she said.

"Life is better. Gods, gods, I will not die!" he shouted, and heaved himself up and tried to gnaw the thongs, but he could not reach them, and cursed again. "To die here in a trap, slowly, in the dark!" He rolled himself, his armor clattering, to the mouth of the cave and thrust his back against the rock. But he was too closely bound to use his strength. A new notion came to him, and he laughed. "I will loose you and you shall loose me." He rolled back and began to bite at the thongs about her body. But the hide was too strong for him and after a while he fell back, spitting and groaning, "I thirst! Gods, how I thirst!"

Yet it was he who slept first, with his head upon her, and she lay still, her eyes wide in the dark.

He was waked by a grinding of the rock. A ray of pale light broke into the cave. "Woman, they come to kill us," he said with parched lips.

"It is well," she murmured.

The rock rolled away with a crash. Moonlight filled the cave. "By Pollux, I am weaker than I should be. This must be looked to," they heard some one say. Into the mouth of the cave came a tall figure. "What, are you there yet, man and woman? How do you say now? Which is the better, life or death?"

"Mock at a man who is bound, Roman," Cunoval said.

"You win that bout, barbarian. Well, let us try another." Caesar stooped and came into the cave, and drew his sword and cut their bonds, the woman's first. As soon as they were

loosed Cunoval heaved himself up and clutched at him. Cæsar did not use his sword. With his left hand he flung the Briton back, for the numbed, cramped limbs had no strength in them. "Fool, I carry a sword!"

"My hands against your sword!"

"When your blood runs again, I do not doubt it. What, then? Shall I kill you now?" Cæsar laughed and sheathed his sword. "I did not come for that, Cunoval. I come alone."

"Alone?" Zoe echoed.

"Ha, the Greek brain is here," Cæsar said, and quoted Greek, "'Better to be the slave of a man of no substance who hath small livelihood than reign over all the shades of the dead.' Is it so, Zoe?"

"Better to die with one dear than live with none," she said. "That Cæsar knows."

"If I know that, I know nothing, most fair philosopher. Your will is still for death, then?"

"We will die free. We will die our own," Cunoval said.

"Which of us is his own, Briton? Against necessity the gods themselves fight in vain."

"I—I fight always," Cunoval cried.

"Come then," he led the way out of the cave. "There is bread and wine there in the saddlebag. Eat and drink as you go." He mounted and rode on down the mountainside. "In the haven yonder, our Glabrio has a little yacht. Can you sail a boat, Briton?"

"To the end of the world!"

"Nay, the world is but yourselves, with you. It ends never, perhaps. Well, make the island in the bay. Buy food there, I give you gold, and water your boat, and sail away. North of west lies land, Briton, the isle of Corsica, and northward still the coast of Gaul."

"Gods, you have all things in your head. All that is to come is clear to you like a thing done. You are a great man, Roman!"

"Alas, my barbarian, who knows? The unborn souls give judgment. What comfort is in that? I am in the court of Cunoval's children's children. See, I give you the sword of Cæsar. I give you good fortune."

"Good fortune to you! Hail! Farewell!"

Cæsar lifted his hand. "When you are come to your island, bid them look for Cæsar. Farewell, Zoe! Happy hours!"

"Live long and happy, Cæsar!"

He reined up his horse above the strand and watched them clamber aboard and cast off and set sail. And on the night wind came a shout from Cunoval, "Free! Free!"

"Immortal gods! If I could feel what that barbarian feels! Well, I should be what he is, a fool, and so come to the happy isles! Forward, Cæsar! There is for you only the world!" He rode away through the vineyards under the setting moon.



GIFTS

YOU who have known the larger ways of living
And all the ecstasy of being free,
You who have crowned my peasant heart by giving
Your royal love to me,
Take now the simple gifts I have to proffer,
My love, my life, the all that I can bring;
You make them rich, these little things I offer,
By making me a king!

PERRIN HOLMES LOWREY.



Love and the Royal Goose Carver

By Robert W. Sneddon

Author of "A Son of Belgium,"
"The Double Cross," etc.

HE arrived about the middle of December with a small black hand bag, in a manner which was at once imperious and ingratiating. His heavy coat was hung with icicles and his feet carried their own swimming pools.

The colored servant let him into the hall of the boarding house, where he stood with his chin held rather high, as if to avoid looking at the strip of red carpet, rubbed threadbare by the passage, for decades, of transient roomers.

Mrs. McGruder, summoned hastily from the receipt of custom, scrutinized his appearance for a moment, then, satisfied by its apparent prosperity, sailed forward majestically, and addressed him in that honeyed tone which she reserved for probable residents whose credit was as yet unassailed:

"Good morning, sir, what can I do for you?"

"Something tells me you have a room for me," he said calmly.

Mrs. McGruder paused a moment, in mental calculation.

"I have one," she said at last. "Second floor back. Would you like to look at it?" She raised her voice in a commanding, "Julia!"

He raised his hand.

"That's all right. I have seen it. All second floor backs are alike. How much, ma'am, for room and board?"

"Fifteen dollars a week. You see, things are terrible high, and——"

Without a word he pulled out a roll of bills, and peeling off one, handed it to her airily. It was a hundred.

"I'm afraid I haven't the change," she gasped, losing something of her composure, "this being Tuesday. I do my banking Mondays, you see."

"No hurry," said the new boarder. "I can trust you and maybe you can do the same for me at a pinch."

Mrs. McGruder relinquished the idea of calling for the colored girl who had not answered her previous summons, and herself led the way upstairs.

"This way, please. I hope you'll be comfortable here. You're a business young man, I suppose?"

"Oh, no!" he confessed, "not at all. No, indeed!"

He seemed rather distressed at the suggestion, and, for the time being, Mrs. McGruder did not press the point. Probably one of those bohemians, but his money was as good as another's, and hundred-dollar bills aren't so common nowadays.

She threw open the door with an air which usually came under the take-it-or-leave-it category, but which, in this instance, was tempered with a certain deference.

"A nice, cosy room, even if I do say it myself."

At sight of the forbidding aspect of the room, its floor much carpeted to hide the old woodwork, the chipped white iron bed with its obvious valley between foot and head, the bureau from which the wood of the drawers shrank away in apprehension, and the tottering washstand with its ugly earthenware, the new boarder closed his eyes and shuddered faintly.

Mrs. McGruder was pulling up the blind in happy ignorance.

"There, now," she said cheerfully, "I know you'll be happy here. The bathroom's next door, and lunch is at twelve. We have some very exclusive ladies and gentlemen here. Now I must go and see what Julia is doing. My, what a care and a worry servants is! Oh, by the way, if any one calls, or there's letters, what name shall I look for?"

He drew down his gaze from the cracks in the ceiling.

"Name—O'Connor, Roderic O'Connor."

Mrs. McGruder felt a momentary disappointment which she could not explain. She had half expected a more high-sounding name.

"Very well, Mr. O'Connor," she said, however, "I'll send up clean towels. You'll be down for lunch, then."

"Yes, yes!"

With a heavy tread, Mrs. McGruder, going out of the room, closed the door behind her, and stood listening for a moment before descending the stairs, very thoughtfully.

The young gentleman seemed very sure of himself. A good-looking young fellow and pleasant spoken. Maybe one of those writers or artists or movie stars. She racked her brains, but try as she would, she could not recollect having seen his face on the screen. Anyway, he was a perfect gentleman. No fuss, no questions, no imputations as to the probable presence of board-

ing-house fauna. Ah, well, she was glad enough to have another fifteen coming in every week!

When the new boarder came down to the dining room in the basement, he found it already tenanted by a solitary luncher, a gray-bearded old man, who looked at him suspiciously out of watery eyes, and continued to devour sliced tomatoes with a sustained ferocity. Mr. O'Connor took his seat and unfolded the ragged napkin.

Suddenly his neighbor cleared his throat and addressed him sharply:

"By the looks of you, you might be Irish, young fella."

"I might be, and as it happens, I am," said the young man genially, "just as by the length of your beard, you might be Noah. I see you haven't got the water out of your eyes yet."

"Ah, you're Irish all right," said the old man bitterly. "It was a sorry day when Saint Patrick put the gift of words into the mouth of a lot of roaring young fellas like yourself."

"Calm yourself, old man," answered the newcomer, without rancor, "for I can see by the looks of you that you are a man that has done a power of thinking in his day, sitting easy in a chair maybe, and pondering over the whys and the wherefores of life. And maybe you can give me a word of wisdom when you get through with your tomatoes, not that I would be hurrying them down any faster than they're going."

The old man bolted the last red slice, and cast a hungry eye in the direction of the kitchen. For a moment he raised his knife as if about to sound a peremptory summons on the glass of water before him, then laid it down disconsolately.

"'Tis a terrible thing for an old fella that has carved his goose at his own table to be sitting in a basement, waiting the pleasure of thim to bring in the soup. Ah, many's the fine goose

I've carved. I was the fine carver in my day!"

The new boarder had been considering him with profound interest. Suddenly he leaned forward with a beaming smile, as though divine inspiration had that very instant descended upon him.

"Then, first carver you'll have to be, old man!"

"Is it carving you're talking about?" rejoined the old man dreamily. "Faith, I could carve the leg off a grasshopper and never shed a drop of blood."

"Then it's a bargain," said the young man decisively. "I appoint you now as first goose carver."

"Is it a hotel job you're speaking of?" asked his neighbor, bending forward eagerly.

"It is not. Something better. 'Tis a royal post I have in mind."

"'Tis a mighty mysterious way of speaking you have, young fella," said the graybeard, regarding him in a perplexed fashion, "and I'd be better pleased if one or the other of us, failing the both, could come to some agreement as to the meaning of what we're conversing about."

"A secret is not to be whispered to the first comer," said the singular young man reassuringly, "and for all I know, you might be the public news crier of New York! But let your mind be easy; when the time comes, I'll speak freely enough."

"It might be that when the soup is on the table would be a good time, for who will be hearing what we say to one another as we sup our broth? Here's the girl now."

Two plates of watered soup were set in front of them, and the old man crumbled a piece of bread into his and then proceeded to audible assimilation of the mess.

"When you're hungry," he confided earnestly, "there's nothing like deceiving the appetite with a piece of bread."

Then, waiting till Julia had shuffled off again, he bent forward.

"Now! What is it all about?"

"Are you a Democrat or a Republican?" asked the young man solemnly.

"A Democrat. Have I the looks of a Republican, I ask ye?"

"Then you're an Irish Democrat. Is that right?"

"It is. Every time!"

"Then you can't be an Irish Republican."

"Divil the bit of it. No, sor, I am what I said."

"Then you can have no sympathy for the Irish Republic. That follows, as easy as the tail follows the pig."

The old man laid down his spoon and gazed at his neighbor open-mouthed.

"Well now, I never thought of that! That's right! Now, that's a queer thing, all right!"

"It is, indeed," continued the young man severely. "And if they set up a republic in the old country, where would the Democrats be, I ask ye? Now is that a fair question, or is it not?"

A bewildered look grew on the old man's face, and he pulled his beard nervously.

"'Tis a quandary I'm in now," he murmured, "a quandary, indeed!"

"Then, 'tis myself can get you out of it," said Mr. O'Connor with easy and increasing confidence, "for 'tis the strangest thing that I should be over here on a secret mission myself, incognito as it were, and when I meet an intelligent old fella like yourself, it is my duty to put him straight, where he might be going crooked."

"I never was crooked in my life," said the old man fiercely, "and I'll trouble ye not to be makin' so free with my character, for 'tis myself that's telling ye, man or boy, there niver was an O'Toole that brought shame to the name of Irishman."

"Believe me, Mr. O'Toole," said the young man earnestly, "I reverence every hair of the beard on your chin, and may I be stricken blind and dumb if I meant any insult to your score or two of gray hairs! And least of all would I be insulting a man of the name of O'Toole, for 'tis a bad thing when kings and the sons of kings be falling out, and making way for the common enemy. But it would be a sad thing for a descendant of kings to be setting up a republic. In America, it's all right, for all Americans are born to the red, white, and blue, just as you and myself were born to the royal purple."

"What! What!" spluttered the old man. "What the devil are ye talking about now? Is it a king you're calling me?"

"It is, indeed," said his tempter in a low whisper. "Sure, didn't I know it the moment I set my two eyes on ye, and I said to myself, 'here is one of my royal subjects,' for you may remember, Mr. O'Toole, that the kings of Ireland chose one of their number to be chief, or, as they called him, king of kings."

He paused impressively, then evidently urged to the final confidence by the old man's interest, continued:

"I can trust you, Mr. O'Toole. 'Tis a great secret and one that an Irishman would never betray. Maybe ye thought that the royal race had died out. You were wrong, as I will demonstrate. I am the lineal descendant of O'Connor, last of the kings of kings, before Henry the Second, of England, bad cess to the name of him, thought to call himself Lord of Ireland. Yes, I am the last of the O'Connors. Many's the time my old dad, God rest his soul, would get out the old crown from the trunk in the attic, and set it on my head. 'Never forget, my boy,' says he, 'Ireland for the Irish; for some day, maybe you'll be sitting on a golden

throne, dispensing home rule and justice to them that have not forgotten the good old times when the kings of Ireland were thick as flies round the footstool of your great ancestor, kissing the ring upon his royal thumb.'"

"From all accounts," said O'Toole, mopping up the gravy on his plate with persevering energy, "these same kings were a rare, tearing lot of wild boys that thought of nothing but cutting each other's throats and running away with each other's wives, God bless them all! But, bedad, if they did, what concern was it of the English? 'Tis a queer idea the English have, then as now, of being policemen, and diverting the traffic in slaughter. More fools them, says I, for whin two friends gets to fighting, 'tis always the cop that gets the worst of it."

As the old gentleman seemed inclined to let his mind run upon ancient grievances, the last of the kings of Ireland drained the last drop of sugar from his coffee cup, and made the preliminary motions of rising.

"Oh," he said suddenly, "not a word to a living soul, Mr. O'Toole!"

"Mum's the word," said the old man very seriously. "Ye may trust the word of an O'Toole, and I niver was one for gossip."

O'Connor bowed ceremoniously. At the door, he stopped and regarded O'Toole with the expression of one who, walking along Broadway, is confronted by the bizarre spectacle of a Diplodocus; then, composing his face, he went upstairs to his room. A few minutes later, Mrs. McGruder, roused by the slam of the street door, saw him walking airily to the corner of the block, with the leisurely unconcern of the idle rich.

O'Connor returned to the house in time for dinner, and found himself next to Mrs. McGruder who presided over the long dining table. At the far end, he saw old man O'Toole who

nodded to him familiarly but with a certain deference which did not escape the landlady's notice.

"You met Mr. O'Toole at lunch, I suppose?" she asked in a confidential whisper. "I don't know but what—" She paused as if inviting a question.

"But what?" asked her boarder.

"Well, he's an old man now, and he's not so bright as he was once, Mr. O'Connor. In fact, I'm afraid he is rather simple; but then, he's had a hard life and you can't blame him."

"Well, now, I never would have thought him simple," said O'Connor seriously. "You don't tell me so, ma'am!"

"Of course, it's no concern of mine. He gives me no trouble, and pays his board regular. He has a pension, I believe—just enough to live on. I dare say it's little enough amusement he has."

"I'll try my best to keep him lively," murmured O'Connor reflectively.

A stout gentleman at Mrs. McGruder's other elbow thrust his head forward.

"Is it O'Toole you're talking about? It's my belief that the old boy is dying on his feet for want of something to occupy his mind. I've seen him sit dreaming for hours, but to-night he looks quite chipper. What's come over him? Looks positively alive to-night!"

O'Connor smiled knowingly. He thought he could have revealed the mystery. All that afternoon he had been troubled in mind. Had he been right to involve the trusting old man in the mesh of the conspiracy he had woven at lunch time? But now, it seemed he had given him something to think about, and that which had been thoughtless mischief might turn out to be a benefaction.

"Got a job, I suppose?" said the stout man affably. "I'm in women's fancies myself."

"Eh!" ejaculated O'Connor. "For

the love of heaven! what are women's fancies?"

The stout man winked his eye mysteriously.

"Ah! Might be men, but it ain't! Feather fancies—hat trimmings. I sell them on the road for Bloomstein & Sons. Good house, you bet, and never a kick about your expense account. Seems to me I met you somewhere on the road. Salesman yourself, ain't you?"

"Not I," said O'Connor hastily. "More's the pity, in my line! I can sell my stories sometimes, but mostly not."

"Oh, you're one of them writing fellows!" remarked the salesman. "Then I guess you have a pretty gay old time!"

"Depends how you look at it," answered O'Connor grimly. "More like hard work, to my way of thinking."

"Oh, come off it!" said the salesman sarcastically. "I met some of you bohemians before. Say, I always thought if I had the time, I could write myself. I've had some adventures myself! There was one time I met a couple dancers in St. Louis, and say!"

"Mr. Jacobs," said Mrs. McGruder icily, "if you're through with your plate, maybe you'll let Julia remove it."

"Oh, beg pardon! Some other time, old man," said the salesman hastily, with a warning wink of great caution toward the landlady. "Maybe better not, eh? Ladies present."

"Quite so," said O'Connor affably, choking down his rage. "Bohemian!" For two cents he'd ram his teeth down his throat! He let his glance sweep round the circle of faces. Good heavens! they were a dull-looking lot! Whatever had possessed him to pick out this dump? Luckily, he had not had his trunks and typewriter sent from the express office yet. He could walk out if he wanted, with the change of his hundred-dollar bill. Twenty ones

and a hundred; that represented the financial standing of Roderic O'Connor. He always paid boarding-house keepers with a big bill at first, to inspire confidence, for there had been times not so remote when he had to stall off the houser of his person and ambitions, till some editor, easier than the others, came to the rescue with a check.

Suddenly, he stiffened in his chair. By George! there was a pretty girl. What the devil was she doing in this bunch? She and old O'Toole had the only faces in which there was a gleam of understanding of the things which interested him, from which it may be seen that Mr. O'Connor was in the stage of contempt for humanity in the mass, which stands as the greatest obstacle to the success of the young artist whose education comes from books, and not from life. She was looking at him with a scrutiny of curiosity, as though similarly puzzled. At once, a bond of sympathy was established.

"Who is the pretty girl?" he asked Mrs. McGruder.

"The pretty girl——" echoed the landlady, awakening from her calculations. "Oh! you mean Miss Field, I suppose."

"The one with the dark eyes."

"Meet Mr. O'Connor, Miss Field. Miss Field, Mr. O'Connor," announced Mrs. McGruder, unbending.

Their eyes met, his admiring, hers with a confused amusement. Her lips twitched, as if she wanted to laugh.

There was a general shoving back of chairs, and the company rose. Mr. O'Toole looked with an almost pleading glance at his young friend, but with a friendly nod, that independent young gentleman strolled past him to Miss Field.

"She's a funny old thing, isn't she?" said Miss Field inconsequentially. "But when you get to know her, she's a

dear! Did I hear you say you were a writer? I couldn't help hearing part of your conversation."

"Yes, I'm a writer, but I hope you won't hold that against me," said O'Connor earnestly.

"How did you happen to come to Mrs. McGruder's?"

"I don't know. Fate, I guess. I was walking past and I liked the green paint on the front door. Have you been here long yourself?"

"Nearly two years."

"Two years! That's some recommendation!"

"It's quiet, and convenient to the office."

"Oh, you're in an office?"

"Yes, I'm secretary to the editor of the *Such and Such Magazine*."

"For the land's sake! then we're related."

She started back.

"Sure we are," O'Connor continued blithely. "I'm one of Necessity's closest relations, and Necessity was the mother of Invention, and Invention was the father of Lies, and Lies begat Fiction and Fiction begat the modern magazine. As an actor might say to an actress, 'I'm a Forty-second Street cousin of yours.'"

She laughed prettily.

"I never heard that one before."

"No, it hasn't reached Times Square yet. It just came to my tongue!"

"Well, since you're in the mood, I mustn't keep you from your work."

"Now, you're joking," he pleaded.

"I can see you would be a regular slave driver if you had your own way."

"But I never do get my own way," she confessed. "Are you writing anything now?"

"I am not. I just moved out of my old place because I wasn't."

"Temperamental?"

There was just the tiniest tilting of her eyebrows.

"Somewhat. Nothing to worry

about, though. I like the right surroundings and the right people!"

"There's atmosphere here if you're looking for that," she told him hastily. "I wish some one would write a New York Maison Vauquer."

"So you read Balzac?"

"Yes."

"Great old boy! Say, he could write. Well, I'll have to look around, then. Mr. O'Toole would make a good Père Goriot to start with."

"He's a nice old man, though he can jump on you if you say anything he doesn't like."

"Oh, I can handle him all right," said O'Connor confidently. "I've got him on a string right now."

"I must go now. Pleased to have met you," she said primly, and, with a nod of her well-shaped head, walked off.

"Oh, boy!" murmured O'Connor softly. "Guess I'd better send for my trunks and the old machine."

It is to be supposed he did that night, judging from the sounds like pneumatic riveting which shook the floor of the second floor back, next morning. Luckily, the occupant under him was out all day long, and could not protest against the steady pounding out of fiction. This frenzied labor apparently had no effect on the toiler's appetite, for at twelve o'clock he was in his place at the lunch table. Mr. O'Toole was there before him, nevertheless, watching the kitchen door with an anxious eye. He greeted O'Connor with a sly smile.

"All's well," he announced in a mysterious whisper. "I breathed niver a word to any of them. What in the world is it now that you're doing in your room? Making swords and daggers? The hammering was like to drive the ceiling up."

O'Connor looked amazed.

"Swords and daggers? Oh, I see! No! Nothing like that, Mr. O'Toole.

I'm a peaceable young fellow. I'm typewriting."

"Is that all? Well now, I did be thinking you are getting ready for the great day! And what would you be typewriting for?"

"Got to live, somehow, Mr. O'Toole."

"'Tis a great shame now, and you a king, by rights; a great shame, indeed! I've been construing it over last night, and the more I am thinking what a fine job it will be for my old days!"

"Job!"

The old man put out a trembling hand and laid it on O'Connor's arm, to capture his wandering attention.

"Yes, the job you spoke about yesterday, at this very hour."

"But I can't give you any job," O'Connor protested.

"Oh, sor, are ye going back on your word? Sure, I've been that happy thinking of it! I've always dreamt of a fine political job, to my taste, a job I wanted."

O'Connor groaned inwardly. He dared not meet the old man's eyes and their eloquent pleading.

"I meant—just now. I can't give you a job, just now, Mr. O'Toole," he temporized.

"Of course not, of course not," said the old man quickly. "Faith, no! But when things is all right—it may take time—but when the time comes, you won't be after forgetting my job—the job of royal goose carver, when you're King of Ireland."

"When I'm King of Ireland, then," said O'Connor, throwing a sop to his conscience, "I'll see that you're appointed to the post of royal goose carver."

"It's a bargain, then."

"It's a bargain," said O'Connor reluctantly.

"God spare me, I hope to live to see the day," murmured O'Toole piously, "for an elegant post it must be, stand-

ing at a long sideboard; or maybe I'll be sitting on a high chair by it."

"Sitting, more likely," said O'Connor between mouthfuls of Irish stew. "Sure, no one would be asking an old fella like you to be standing on his pins, carving geese the long day. But maybe you'll be like a lord, with your men all carving for you, and you giving your commands like a general. 'Another leg off that goose for the President of the United States, God bless him, and a slice off the breast for the Queen of England.'"

"What! Will the Queen of England be there, did ye say?"

"Sure! By that time we'll be friendly."

"By the powers!" quavered the old man. "Niver did I look to be carving vittles for the Queen of England or her man, or any of thim foreigners. Welladay now, 'tis the great changes we'll be seeing! 'Tis the rare, comforting thought you have give me in my old age. Sure, I never thought to see Christmas again, and it only a week off, and maybe a goose to be carved! 'Tis then you'll see what I can do."

"I hope so," answered O'Connor shamefacedly.

"I saw you speaking to Miss Field last night. There's the girl now!"

"Yes."

"A queen, sor," continued O'Toole significantly.

"Eh! Oh," stammered O'Connor, nonplused for the first time to find his secret ambition exposed, "yes, she is a nice girl, Mr. O'Toole."

"You couldn't do better," said O'Toole sincerely, and O'Connor was tempted to agree with him.

Miss Field did not appear at dinner that night, and O'Connor was bitterly disappointed, but later on, as he was going out, he saw her in the parlor, writing a letter at the old-fashioned desk. He was for going on, but she

saw him in the mirror and turned round.

"Oh, Mr. O'Connor, are you in a hurry? I meant to tell you at dinner, but I was kept late at the office. I heard Mr. Dix say he wished he could get a series of New York stories with a new twist to them, and I wondered if you had anything."

"Oh, I say, that's a good tip! I'm much obliged to you, Miss Field. I have one, and I think I can do some more. Suppose I go and see Mr. Dix. How's that?"

"Why don't you? If you can get round him the way you got round Mr. O'Toole, you'll do wonders. Whatever have you been doing to the old man? He kept me talking half an hour on the stairs about you."

"No!" cried O'Connor guiltily. "What in Heaven's name did he say about me?"

"To keep my eye on you, that you were a coming man, a great man."

"Good heavens!" groaned O'Connor, "Did he, now?"

"I never heard him say a good word about any one before, though he was always very gentle to me."

"Oh, say, Miss Field," cried O'Connor, overcome with remorse, "I feel like a skunk! I never thought the old man would swallow the stuff I told him. You see, it was this way. When I went down to the dining room the day I came, I saw him sitting there like an old cockalorum, with an air of 'keep-your-place, young fella! I'm the old stand-by of the place.' And I don't know what made me—it must have been the devil of mischief himself put it into my head—but I told him a fairy tale about myself, and he believed it. He swallowed hook and sinker and all."

"What did you tell him? It must have been an extraordinary tale!"

"It was!" said O'Connor penitently. "I told him I was the rightful King of Ireland, and that I was here to get my

followers together to establish myself in the old country. Part of that was right, for 'tis a tradition of our family that we are the descendants of the old King Roderic O'Connor."

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Field. "And where did Mr. O'Toole come into it?"

"He was talking about carving geese, so I said he'd be appointed royal goose carver, when the time came. Royal goose carver! Wouldn't you have thought any one would have caught on to the absurdity of that? But he didn't! He believes it absolutely. I'm in an awful mess! If I tell him the truth, it will break his heart. You can see that, can't you?"

"Well, all I can say," said Miss Field, rising to her feet and picking up her writing materials, "is that you'll probably make a great success as a writer of fiction; but I don't think I'll want to know you, deceiving an old man like that!"

"Oh, but——" protested O'Connor starting forward.

"Don't! You're a hateful beast!" and with that she walked past him, her head held high, and her lips trembling.

For one wild moment, O'Connor thought of stopping her by force, but one glance at the danger signal flaming in her cheeks held him back, and grinding his teeth, he clapped his hat on his head and strode out of the front door.

For a melancholy week, O'Connor was exposed to the disapproving stare of Miss Field at the dinner table, until he felt himself shrink to the dimension of a peanut, though he did not acknowledge it, rattling noisily in his shell, and even causing Mrs. McGruder to yield to the influence of his miserable assumption of good spirits.

Christmas was approaching and the first symptoms of the season were appearing in the house: holly wreaths in the windows and festoons of green over the mirror above the dining-room mantel. Already, on the breakfast table

the first piles of greetings were on view, and there was an excitement which extended even to the stolid soul of Julia, whose daydreams of dollar bills which would be slipped, as if by magic, into her receptive palm, seemed to accelerate rather than diminish her powers of locomotion. The boarders were returning in the evening with packages of so mysterious a nature that they had to be conveyed at once, with the utmost secrecy, to their respective rooms.

Even O'Toole ventured forth in a blinding snowstorm, in spite of Mrs. McGruder's protests, on an errand which he would confide to no one, and returned home, soaked to the skin, but elated. And that night, he coughed so sustainedly that his next-door neighbor, Miss Field, lost most of her beauty sleep. In the morning, he did not appear for breakfast, and startled by this phenomenal reversal of the habits of years, Mrs. McGruder went up herself to see what was the matter. A few minutes later, she came hurrying downstairs, and telephoned for a doctor.

O'Connor had been out most of the day and came home jubilant. He had seen Mr. Dix and persuaded him to order a series of six stories, in spite of the fact that he had to do his talking with the knowledge that, behind a desk in the corner, sat Miss Field, furiously engaged in typing letters. She had not acknowledged his presence, and perhaps that, stirring his pique, had inspired him to put up an extra good fight for his aspirations. Anyway, he had got the order, and his brain was beginning vaguely to plan out the five unwritten stories.

It was only at the end of the dinner that he noticed O'Toole was absent.

"Where's the patriarch to-night? Celebrating?" he asked Mrs. McGruder.

"Indeed no, the poor man! He's in his room."

She had answered nervously, almost reluctantly.

"Not sick, surely?" asked O'Connor quickly.

"Very ill, Mr. O'Connor. In fact"—then it came out in a burst—"the doctor—I sent for him right away—says there's only one chance in a thousand, at his age, to get over it—influenza—he got himself soaked yesterday."

"My God!" exclaimed O'Connor, genuinely shocked.

"Sh! Don't say anything about it," she whispered, with an anxious glance round the table. "Boarders is queer things and easy scared, and I can't afford to lose any of them at this time."

"Of course not. Have you a nurse? This is terrible! The poor old fellow!"

She shook her head.

"Why not? You must get one right away. I'll try and get one now."

"I've been looking after him myself, and Miss Field offered to go up whenever she came home. It seems she had some training as a nurse. I never knew it till to-night. Oh, dear, and he has no friends I can notify."

O'Connor pushed back his chair, and with stumbling steps ascended the stairs to the third floor. He tapped softly at O'Toole's door. It was opened by Miss Field, and as he stood, nervously swaying on his feet, scarcely able to speak, she came out, and closed the door behind her.

"How—how is he?" faltered O'Connor.

She shook her head.

"Can I do anything?" O'Connor asked eagerly.

"I've just sent for the doctor again. He's sinking very fast," she answered quietly.

"Can't I see him—just for a minute?"

A look of antagonism crept into her face.

"I'd think you'd be ashamed ever to

look him in the eyes again!" she said coldly.

There was a sound of a quavering voice, which, low as it was, passed through the wooden panels.

"He's conscious now," she whispered. "Wait—don't go away."

The door closed behind her. A moment of time passed with leaden tread, trampling over O'Connor's heart; then the door opened.

"Come in quickly! He's asking for you."

There was an entreaty in her expression, and O'Connor knew, without words, what she wanted him to do—to tell the truth, not to let the old man go on his long way, bearing a lie to the end of his journey.

O'Toole was lying with eyes closed. As O'Connor tiptoed to the bedside, the eyes opened vacantly, then into them leaped a look of recognition.

"Good evening, my boy! There's a parcel—by the bureau," he muttered. "Open it, will you, now!"

Bewildered, O'Connor went to the bureau and found the parcel. O'Toole nodded his head, watching with anxious eyes. With fingers which fumbled clumsily, O'Connor broke the string, and pulled out a knitted tie of brilliant green.

"For—for you!" quavered the old man. "Put it on—help him, Nelly!"

Scarcely knowing what he was doing, O'Connor loosened his collar and pulled out the black tie. The old man motioned with a frail hand, and Miss Field, taking the tie in her hand, put it about the collar and knotted it. O'Connor could feel that she was trembling, and he himself shivered. As if satisfied by the performance of some mystic rite, the old man smiled faintly.

"Thank you, Mr. O'Toole," said O'Connor, trying to steady his voice. "It's a beautiful tie, and a beautiful

color! I hope I'll wear it many a day for you to see it!"

"No, my boy," said O'Toole feebly, "it's dying I am. Well, sure, and it's time for an old fella like me to be packing. There's just the one thing on my mind—me job."

For one agonized minute, O'Connor looked into the eyes of the girl, now standing on the opposite side of the bed. Suddenly, they fell and she bowed her head.

"Yes, Mr. O'Toole," said O'Connor. "When the time comes, there'll be another man to be carving thim geese—a fine job it would have been"—he was rambling now—"and 'tis myself could have filled it! I could carve the leg off a grasshopper without shedding one drop of blood, that's the carver I am! But maybe when I get beyant the golden gates, 'tis Saint Peter himself will have a job for me."

"I'm sure of it," said O'Connor unsteadily. He could not look at the girl now, but he felt that from her flowed a current of approval of the course he was taking.

"You're a good girl, Nelly," resumed the old man, after a long silence, "a good girl."

"Oh, Mr. Toole," she said brokenly.

"And I'm thinkin' ye'd make a fine queen for the king here. Where's your hand—your hand—Nelly—'tis grow-

ing cold—give me your hand and yours—your highness.

O'Connor winced cruelly as he felt the old man join their hands and give them a feeble clasp. He dared not move.

"A fine—pair—God bless—me chil——"

His eyes closed as though gladly, and it seemed to O'Connor that the tears streaming down his own face were the waters of peace gently carrying away the memory of that which might have tormented him in spirit throughout the long years to come, and that the death of this old man was, for himself, the birth of all knowledge of himself and his kind. In the silence, all things which had been dark were made clear to him, and he knew that henceforth, as he wrote, it would be with the greater sympathy and understanding which is the heritage of those who meet both love and death on the same threshold.

Slowly he tried to withdraw his hand from hers, still clinging as if in obedience to the wish of him who had guided them, all unconscious of the way himself, and as he felt his hand clasped still tighter, he raised his head and looked at her.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" he whispered, and knew he was forgiven.



THE BIRTH OF THE FIREFLY

A DEWDROP trembled on an aspen leaf;
Above, a nightingale
Sent through the dark its first low note of grief,
Across the shadowy vale.

And as that note throbbed on the sentient air,
Wrung from a heart forlorn,
The dewdrop slipped into the dusk, and there
A firefly was born.

DORIS KENYON.

The Way the Wind Blows

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Rosa Loftus, a young Englishwoman, who has been engaged in war work in France, returns with a strong distaste for the characteristic inactivity of women of her class. She determines to make her own way, her zeal being heightened by the fact that her father's fortune has been greatly augmented by "war profits," of which she thoroughly disapproves. In her enterprise she has the sympathy of her friends, the Duchess of Clevemoor and the Comtesse Lavalliére. Rosa breaks her engagement to the duchess' nephew, Wyngate Cox, a titled young gentleman who has played an easy part in the war. Rigidly opposed in her business plans by her father and Cox, and refused any financial aid, she seeks out Miles Rutherford, a corporal who had done her a small favor in France. He loans her five hundred pounds at six per cent—a purely business deal. While in his office, Rosa's glance falls on the picture of a girl whose face holds her interest. On the picture is written: "From Blanche. Thank you." As Rutherford and Rosa are leaving to go to a small shop which Rosa has in mind for her millinery business, "Blanche" comes in. Rutherford hastily arranges a meeting for seven that evening.

After a busy afternoon, in which they look at many shops, and finally hire one, Rosa and Rutherford go to tea and dance until almost dinner time, when Rosa reminds him of his engagement with "Blanche." This party opens the way for continued acquaintanceship, and thereafter the two see much of one another. Meanwhile, Rosa's father and Wyngate Cox become increasingly suspicious of Rutherford's motive in having made the financial loan to Rosa. Questioned by her father, Rosa attempts to clear the situation by telling the simple truth; but for the worldly Loftus there is still but one interpretation. He and Cox call on Rutherford, who, when he discovers what they impute to him, indignantly asks them to leave. Meanwhile Rosa is having great success in her business venture. In need of an assistant, Rutherford undertakes to find one for her. He sends "Blanche" to her. She is a charming French girl, but has about her an air of sadness, of mystery. Rosa's curiosity is piqued. She engages her. Since the visit to Rutherford's office, where she saw Blanche's picture, she has been speculating as to his connection with the girl. Somewhat skeptical of his sense of honor, she renews her interest in Cox. Knowing that they had been in France together, Rosa ventures one evening to discover through Cox why Rutherford is interested in Blanche. Cox hesitatingly infers that their relationship in the past—in Paris, in fact—has been the usual one, unsanctioned by society. Rosa is incensed. Thereafter, when obliged to be with Rutherford, her attitude toward him is cold and unbending.



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The Way the Wind Blows

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"The Price of Wings," etc.

CHAPTER IX.

SOON after the arrival of her morning tea, ordered punctually nowadays for seven thirty, whatever the previous evening's gayeties, Cyril looked in. He wore slippers and a silk dressing gown, and looked sleek and debonair, almost as if he had already bathed and shaved, which he had not. But that was a wonderful morning quality of his. "Good morning, my dear," he said. "So difficult to catch you now if one doesn't arrive with the milk. So excuse this intrusion. You looked very nice last night."

"So did the countess."

"Isn't she sweet?" said Cyril. "She's off next month to Trouville; she's not seeing the season through. And that's what I want to see you about, dear."

"About the countess going to Trouville?"

"Well, if you're not doing anything—if you're going to live this comic sort of life—there's really nothing to tie me here, is there? A round of London engagements at my age isn't the exciting pastime it was."

"You might go to Trouville!"

"I might," replied Cyril blandly and unashamed.

"Well, father?"

"I've had an offer for the house, dear, from some fabulously rich fella,

a New Yorker over here for June and July. A splendid offer! I'm not so rolling in money that——"

"You want to let the house? At once?"

"I can put up somewhere. A big house is more than a bachelor man wants when he hasn't a woman to do the entertaining. You're going to do this comic work."

"I can leave any time."

"Mind, Rosa," said Cyril, looking at her narrowly, "I'm not going to make you an allowance."

"Have I asked you for one?"

"It would be different if you gave up these silly ideas."

"We've discussed all that."

"As it is, you seem determined to stand on your own feet; and so——"

"Certainly, father. Well, I'll have my things packed by to-morrow, if that will do."

"I hate your way of putting things, Rosa. There's one thing, of course, to comfort me; even if I leave town for a bit, you have plenty of good friends near you."

"I shall be all right," she declared proudly.

Cyril rose. "You're very white this morning. Tired? Haven't you slept?"

"Not very well."

"Dear me, child. Stay in bed."

"I must get up."

"You comic thing, Rosa!" said Cyril, wandering to the door.

There he paused. "You and Cox make an awf'ly attractive couple, child."

"Our steps suit nicely."

"So would you suit each other nicely if——"

"We've discussed all that."

Cyril fingered the door knob.

"I suppose, child," he said, turning once more, "that you've a little money to—er—carry you on till these enormous takings—er—begin to be taken?"

"Plenty, thanks."

"Ah, yes. That loan—— It was very regrettable."

"And we have discussed that, too."

"Don't shut me up, my dear, don't shut me up," said the plaintive Cyril, retreating.

With a sort of wry smile the girl lay back on her pillows, sipping the tea. "I don't seem exactly to be—wanted," she thought. That the thought was unjust did not occur. She was filled through with the desperate unreasonableness of an angry woman. She was tired, too; her body ached; the morning was hot. She lay in her bath by and by, unsoothed by the tepid, scented water. And she dressed jerkily; pushing at bureau drawers because under her nervous hands they would not shut all in a moment; tying ribbons tightly and feverishly and having to untie them again; and suffering the manifold small vexations which a woman in a nervous temper inflicts upon herself.

When she arrived at the Knights-bridge place Blanche was already there, having drawn the curtains, dressed the window with three hats made with such wonderful fragility that the materials were merely wafted together, but with wonderful effect, and started work on another. A few straw shapes, all odd, lay on the white chest.

"I bought a few straw hats," Blanche explained. "We had to have some."

Blanche was cool. Her length and slimness, her spider's web mist of hair, her pallor, and her air of retreat, seemed more effective than ever this morning. The lines of her old black gown would not have disgraced the most exclusive atelier.

Rosa stood drawing off her gloves, looking at Blanche.

The French girl, sewing, answered her look with her sweet and subtle smile.

"Do you know," said Rosa deliberately, "I think you are the most interesting person, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" smiled the French girl, putting her head on one side to view the hat poised on her outstretched hand.

"You must have had a very interesting life," Rosa pursued, with the same deliberation.

And standing before the mirror, taking off her hat, and fluffing up her hair as if engrossed with the business, and as if merely making conversation, she went on:

"It was wonderful luck my finding you, and I owe it all to Mr. Rutherford."

"I, too," said Blanche gracefully, "am under a debt to Mr. Rutherford."

"I suppose he knows you quite well? He seemed so sure about your abilities."

Blanche looked swiftly sidelong into the mirror. She looked at Rosa's face. Complete insouciance veiled her quick wariness.

"There is a difference in people," she began, poising the hat. "Some people are well acquainted in half an hour; by a look or one word even. But some people one does not know in a lifetime. You will have noticed that, mademoiselle."

"Oh, yes. But I do not suppose you

have time."

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have known Mr. Rutherford a lifetime."

"Oh, no, mademoiselle, a year or so, and with lapses between."

"He is a very *kind* man," said Rosa.

"Oh, yes," replied Blanche, with drooped eyes.

"He was in France with my cousin, Mr. Wyngate Cox, who came in to fetch me yesterday."

"That was your cousin, Mr. Wyngate Cox, mademoiselle?" replied Blanche, with drooped eyes.

"Yes."

A silence fell; it was a baffling silence. Rosa turned from the mirror and looked with unseeing eyes into the street. Her mind was still a turmoil of questions in spite of the certainty which she forced upon it. She longed to go to Blanche and take her by the shoulders and say: "Tell me everything. Not because I don't know; because I *do* know. But I want it in words. I want to know how it happened; if he still admires you; if you love him."

The telephone bell rang. She answered it.

It was Rutherford speaking.

"That's you, Miss Loftus? Yes, I recognized your voice. This is just to say: I hope you haven't forgotten we're driving down to Richmond or somewhere further out, and dining, to-morrow night. That's all right, isn't it?"

"I hadn't forgotten." She could not help glancing at Blanche over the transmitter. "You'll call for me with the car at seven?"

"Yes. Where?"

"Here, at my shop, I think. I'll wait."

"Thanks so much."

"Thanks. Good-by."

Blanche sat looking soulfully at the hat.

"Do you motor much with Mr. Rutherford?" said Rosa suddenly and crisply.

"Not very much," replied Blanche slowly. She looked full at Rosa, patiently and inquiringly. A sort of dumb appeal invested the gaze, before which Rosa became quiet. But she thought: "Is she jealous? I suppose she has a right to be."

A silence again fell; it became a little tense. Rosa moved about slowly and restlessly. The French girl commenced to girdle the crown of a straw hat with velvet. There they were, two women, seething, burning to hurl questions at each other; the air was charged as with electricity. They were confined together in so small a space; a turn brought them face to face with one another at once. When each had begun to feel this poignantly, the first client came in and relieved the situation.

They sold her a hat. She was a stout, perspiring woman who had traveled up early from a suburb to do the family shopping; not the sort of client they wanted to see, who would carry their hats with an air of conquest. But they received her suavely, and sold her a hat, at the end of half an hour's debate, for three guineas.

The stout woman seemed pleased to pay what was to her an exorbitant price. "I never have before," she kept saying, "but one must begin, musn't one?"

"You *need* a good hat, madame," Blanche replied earnestly. "A cheap hat is *not* your style."

The two girls had nothing but laughter for one another for the next half hour.

Rosa was sorry for the stout woman. She began: "I should like to reduce prices for women like that."

But Blanche replied gaily: "There you spoil her pleasure. She *likes* to pay. It makes her feel more beautiful, more attractive. It will bring her happiness, and then she will be more attractive. Mademoiselle, you must look at life from all angles."

"There are two more women stopping outside!" Rosa cried.

"And our stock, depleted of a hat, looks so bare!" Blanche exclaimed.

And before the customers could enter she had snatched up Rosa's hat, snatched up her own, and poised them on the stands. When the customers showed a predilection for the hats Blanche, checking them, said sweetly:

"Those two, madame, are sold. Lovely hats, are they—not, madame? One was bought by an Italian princess only this morning; one was bought by Mrs. Bonner, the cabinet minister's wife. You know her, madame?" Thus Blanche softly to the dowdy clients. "A very *smart* lady, madame. Very smart indeed. We could copy the hats in twenty-four hours for you, with just a *slight* difference so that Mrs. Bonner's model may remain exclusive. All the models here are *quite* exclusive, madame—Thank you. To what address?"

Blanche was very sweet and very gay; and Rosa, listening, could have loved her, but for the shade between. Again they were alone in the shop, the French girl laughing, and saying demurely:

"Leetle lies, mademoiselle, just leetle ones, are half the secret of business, you will find. One must tell them nicely and never grudge a second to follow up the first; what you call embroidery." And Rosa was crying admiringly, "You are the cleverest thing! What a lot I'll learn from you!" when the door opened and Wyngate entered.

The French girl wilted away to her hat-trimming.

Rosa cried: "Wyn, we've taken ten guineas this morning!"

Wyngate, with an air of hurry, said: "Splendid! Will you lunch, Rosa? I thought a turn round the park; car's outside; and then lunch."

"Above all things, Wyn, it would be

delightful. You will wait five minutes?"

"Charmed," said Wyngate, standing very stiffly just inside the door.

Rosa seized her hat, and dived downstairs into the tiny basement which in busier days was to be used as work-room: "Just five minutes," she called back, "while I powder my nose."

The French girl started to follow her.

A motion of Wyngate's hand stopped her. He took a step forward. "Blanche," he said in a low voice, "stand over here where she—where we won't be heard."

"Oh, mon Dieu!" said the French girl, "why need you come here?"

"I must have a few words with you, Blanche, I—I trust—you see how things are."

"This is the English girl you love?"

Cox nodded. He put his hand on her arm, ran it up and down with a slight coaxing movement, making her shiver. "Blanche darling, you're not a little fool."

"No! No! I am terribly wise."

"You understand these things."

"I understand."

"You shouldn't be here; that Rutherford fella shouldn't have sent you."

"He found me the first employment for which he thought I was fit."

"Oh, yes! Well—" said Cox, with a hurried glance toward the stairway.

"She will never know from me," murmured Blanche, with swimming eyes.

"My darling old girl," said Wyngate, "I do appreciate your loyalty. You're absolutely true."

"Your happiness," Blanche whispered passionately. "Your happiness—that is what I care for most. I would not stand in the path."

"I know you wouldn't," said the young man in a melted voice. "Dine somewhere one evening if you care to. Wouldn't you like to? Somewhere ab-

solutely quiet, of course. Every one's in town and I know every one."

She nodded, biting her lips.

"I'll fix it," said Cox in a low voice.

Rosa ran up the stairs. "I'm ready, Wyn," she said, drawing on her gloves. With alacrity and relief Cox held open the door and they passed out.

"Such a morning, Wyn!" said Rosa. "I told you we've taken ten guineas; all through that wonderful girl, of course. She is amazingly clever. She'll be a godsend to me."

Cox replied, almost dogmatically.

"You know what I said last night. I stick to it. Rutherford had no business to send the girl to you. She—well, she's not the kind of girl. That's all I shall say."

CHAPTER X.

At seven next day Rutherford was round punctually with his car at the Kingsbridge place, and Rosa was ready for him. She was full of a sort of cold preoccupation of anger, but she looked sweet. "Oh, my lovely girl!" Rutherford thought; and he sighed a little involuntarily because, after all, in not the slightest degree was she his.

It was one of the fairest of evenings, and the moment when an impalpable lull comes over London. The workers had gone home; theatergoers were already at dinner; later diners were not yet out; the shops were closed and the armies of women window gazers had gone home aimless till next day. London had leisure to loiter and breathe. The brazen heat had gone out of the sky, and already the faint coolness had dropped like dew over the streets. Bands in the parks were not yet playing. The great city rested. And Rosa, stepping into the car, leaned back with only the faintest of greeting smiles—no word—and blended, as it were, into the quiet scheme.

"She's tired," Rutherford thought,

steering the car through the lessened traffic.

For a while he drove in silence, quite content. It was enough to have her beside him. They left London; the last line of omnibuses dropped behind; the great network of tram lines were passed; they reached open fields, lanes, woods. The car ate up the miles so suavely that it hardly made its pace felt.

"You don't mind where we go?" Rutherford asked at last, turning to the girl.

"No," she replied.

"Because," he continued, "I found a most beautiful place the other day, an idyllic place, and I want to take you there."

She assented casually, and they drove on. The car ran past hedges as sweet as honey; through little old villages clustered with little, old red houses; past orchards and churches and wayside gates and stiles where lingered country boys and girls clumsily, but happily, making love. It was nearly eight-thirty when they entered the main street of Coryton, a straggling village, and pulled up before a long, low, straggling hotel with a flower garden past which a silver trout stream flowed.

"This is the place," said Rutherford, looking to her humbly for her appreciation.

"Lovely," she murmured.

They alighted and walked up a flagged path between rosebushes. It was cool and deliciously quiet; the air full of scents. The girl walked languidly, hardly thinking. She was tired by the turbulence which had been in her heart all day. With the exchange of very few words, she left Rutherford and went to a dressing room to give the few touches to hair and toilet that every woman feels she needs after a motor run. Shut into the room, with the primitive, muslin-draped dressing table, innocent of powders, pins, or scents, she sat down before the glass.

"I'd like to go home straightaway," she thought, not knowing really what she wanted to do. The thought of the tête-à-tête dinner with Rutherford strung her nerves. She lingered before the muslin-hung table, and looked at the silly, simple pink bows tied on the glass, and smelt the mignonette in a bowl on the mantelshef, and thought: "This is a sweet place. So peaceful! One could stay here—and think."

There were two pictures on the walls, oleographs of simpering people.

"Women with faces like that," she thought, "could never have bothered to think at all. How blissful!"

She was there ten whole minutes, lingering about, before she began the business for which she had come. Opening her vanity bag she found powder and cream, and treated her wind-flushed face lightly with both. She pulled the waves of hair down prettily over her ears under her close hat. At last she could linger no longer. She went down.

Rutherford was waiting for her in the hall, and took her to a small parlor with opened windows looking on to the garden. Near the windows a table was laid for two.

"We're dining here; we're the only guests in the place."

She assented; and sat down.

"It was a delicious run," she said at last.

"Topping," said Rutherford. "But you're tired?"

"Not in the least."

"Repenting your decision to lead a working life when you might be a butterfly?"

"One life is as good as another," she replied languidly.

"Oh, come!" he said vigorously.

"You need your dinner. Waiter, two brandy cocktails."

"Really, I hardly ever drink them."

"No. But it will give you the necessary fillip to-night."

The cocktails arrived, and they drank. "Quite true," she said, smiling a little as she put her glass down.

"You shouldn't need it, all the same," Rutherford returned.

He looked straight at her.

"What's the matter?" he said.

"What should be the matter?"

"You don't bluff me," said Rutherford.

The waitress brought fish, and Rosa looked away into the garden, as if absently, with her brain on fire. As soon as the service was over for the moment Rutherford leaned toward her, a ring in his voice which she had not before heard. While it whipped up all her anger, it also thrilled her.

"You don't bluff me," he repeated.

"For two days you've been so unlike yourself. I don't know this Miss Loftus."

"Perhaps you didn't know the other. Perhaps this is I."

"No, this is not you."

"Women can't be always the same."

"But you're not an ordinary woman. You're so different from every one else."

"Have you thought so?"

"I've known it."

She said again, smiling: "There is nothing the matter. What should there be?"

"That I don't know," returned Rutherford steadily.

She had on her mouth that baffling half smile which women wear when they want to hide all feelings. "I suppose we can go out and smoke in the garden after dinner?" she remarked.

"We can certainly go out in the garden after dinner."

The waitress came again. She was a fattish girl with a beaming moon of a face. Rosa glanced at her curiously. And when she had left them again, she said:

"I wonder how that girl manages to be so happy. Is it just stupidity? Or

is it just negation? Is it just that she is not unhappy?"

"She looks very happy indeed." And smiling, he added: "Perhaps she's in love. God bless her!"

"I don't think that will do her much good," said Rosa in a light voice.

Rutherford looked at Rosa facing him with a smiling mouth and bright eyes across the table. She was doing little more than play with her food; and now, putting her elbows on the table, she cupped her chin in her palms, and returned the man's look. Her own gave a slight impression of challenge, as if she said: "There's the glove—thrown down. What do you think of it?"

"Don't talk like that, child," he said. "Don't think like that. What can have taught you to do it?"

Rosa burned. She wanted to cry: "You! You! You! *You!*" She remained with the smile fixed on her mouth, her chin in her palms.

"The whole world," said she in her light voice. "When one looks around, one doesn't think so much of love."

"One does if one sees straight," replied Rutherford.

"I do see straight—straight as a die."

"It's a faculty on which women pride themselves," said Rutherford, "but they don't possess it."

"I shouldn't have put you down as a man who studied women a great deal," said Rosa, "if I didn't know that you do."

"You know more than I know myself."

"I know you better than you think I do, perhaps."

"I want you to know me well," said Rutherford. "I want you to know me very well. I want you to make every opportunity of doing so. It would be kind of you."

"Thank you," said Rosa with a faint gasp, "I will."

"I thank *you*," Rutherford replied with profound humility.

Sense of humor played bitterly among Rosa's anger. It was funny! She could have broken into hysterical laughter. "Talking of—of people," she began, "how clever of you to find Miss Duplessis for me."

"Clever?" said Rutherford, "not at all! I knew her in France. I knew when she came over here, and that she was looking for a job. I knew the only kind of job she could do. There you have it."

"She—she thinks highly of you," said Rosa.

He deprecated it gravely.

"Oh, yes," Rosa insisted, "she does. She is very grateful to you."

"I don't know why," said Rutherford.

"Nor do I," said Rosa distinctly, "it was surely the least you could do for her."

"That is exactly how I always think," Rutherford replied, looking at her straight and seriously.

Rosa became breathless. She looked down at the cloth, traced out its pattern with a finger tip.

"Men are blatant," she thought, "brazen!"

Rutherford continued: "To give a little help—a word only sometimes—to every one you can; it's so simple. And it builds up the world; it's like architecture. Do it for a while, whenever opportunity comes, and at last it becomes more a matter of personal gratification than anything else; not especially worthy even. You feel you have a little memento of yourself in odd corners of the world wherever you've helped some one else to build a place. It's vanity."

"Sometimes," said Rosa, "it might even be an affair of reparation."

"I suppose so," he acknowledged. "Personally, I don't think I've ever owed any one a debt, man or woman."

"Men have differing ideas about what constitutes a debt to a woman."

Rutherford stared.

"Who's been talking to you?" he asked. "What have you been doing?"

"My conclusions are entirely my own."

"Reached solely through your own agency?"

"But—of course."

"I'm glad you are leaving your world," said Rutherford after a pause, "if it teaches you to think rotten things."

"I find them outside what has been my particular world."

"Already?"

"Already. Besides, the four years in France——"

"Years that did you nothing but good, those. You came out of them better and finer all round."

"That's true——" Then she said, unable to leave it alone: "I am sure Miss Duplessis thinks much as I do about men. She looks as if she'd been unhappy."

Rutherford looked down at his brown fingers fiddling with a fork.

"That's what you think about her?"

"Was she unhappy when you knew her in France, Mr. Rutherford?"

"Part of the time, I think she was," he answered abruptly.

"I wonder why?"

"Do you?" said Rutherford. "Personally, I always think a woman's story is her own secret, and she's under no obligation to publish it."

"It so often involves others."

"Invariably."

She paused, at a loss. His quiet replies, while they angered, also baffled her. She felt, in the face of them, with their irreproachable tone, their hint of closing the question, that she could not go on without hurling at him what was in her head. Wyngate knew, but Wyngate, like a gentleman, though he had managed to communicate it to her, had refrained from the crudity of words. He had tried not to give the other man away. Men's codes again! What

warped honor! She fretted scornfully.

"Look at the moon!" said Rutherford.

She glanced out through the open window. Dusk had darkened the garden while they sat there; but now, lambent over the tops of apple trees, appeared the primrose moon. The garden was enchanted.

Rutherford looked at the girl's face, colored by the pinkness of the candle shades, and turned toward the night, so that he saw only her profile. It was steady and the lips were set. She was not sparkling to-night; she seemed older. A sophistication, which he had not marked in her before, had touched her. He looked at her; he looked and looked. She remained staring out into the garden, and he saw that she was indeed unconscious of his regard. She was away in an abstraction, not because of the beauty of the flowers touched by moonlight, or because of any passing impression, but because she had something to think about, something big, something deep.

"Well?" he said softly, by and by.

"Well?" she replied lightly, turning her head.

"There is something worrying you."

"Just a little phase of life that neither I nor any one else can alter."

"Then why worry over it, child?"

Resentment flashed up into her eyes.

"Ah, yes! You'd think that. Men do. It's easy."

"When a man meets the inevitable, he knows it's time to give up. When a woman meets it she dashes herself up against it with redoubled enthusiasm. It's a pity."

"The inevitable?"

"I understand from you that this little phase of life to which you referred is inevitable."

She bit her lips. "I did say so."

The waitress came and went.

"Let me peel you some fruit," said Rutherford.

"Thank you."

She toyed with the fruit idly.

"Shall we have coffee in the garden?" said Rutherford. "We can. There's a little arbor hung with roses. It is divine."

"I should like it."

She rose. Rutherford watched her narrowly. He guessed far from the truth. She looked so like a spoiled darling to-night, with her moods and petulances, that she bewildered his ideas of her, what he thought he knew of her. Her very way of tossing down her napkin; the manner of her going leisurely and languorously down the steps from the French windows into the garden; her tricks of moving and speaking; all invested her with a difference. He followed her without a word till she paused for guidance at a turn in the path. "Down here," he said crisply, showing a second path. She turned down it, and they came almost at once to the arbor, merely a rose-hung roof, with its rustic pillars twined with ramblers. The girl paused and said over her shoulder:

"What a ducky place!"

The manner of her drawl, the careless glance over her shoulder, the whole air of her, stung him. He stepped past and faced her.

"There is something between us to-night," he said. "I can't climb over it to you. What is it?"

She put her head back and looked at him, slowly. A half-smile broke over her mouth. Almost before she uttered them he knew the pettifogging words she would say. "Really—what d'you mean?"

She said them.

"You know," said Rutherford.

"Truly," she replied, "I don't know how you mean."

"You do know," he repeated.

The girl made the faintest movement

to go on, a sort of slight ripple of her whole person expressing impatience. Rutherford took a grip on himself.

"Are we going to quarrel?" she uttered in a laughing voice.

"A quarrel must have two sides," he replied. "There will be no quarrel."

Again she moved slightly, and he let her pass. She sat down in a hammock slung from two pillars of the arbor, and swayed herself with a foot on the ground. Rutherford leaned against a pillar, looking at her.

"There is something the matter," he said. "Wouldn't it be easy to tell me what it is?"

"Explanations are never easy," said Rosa, "besides, there's nothing to explain."

"In that case——"

After a little pause he offered cigarettes. She took one and smoked with an air of deliberation, slowly swaying. He lighted one, too. They made a business of this for a few minutes, futile diversion as it was.

"Did you order coffee here?" said Rosa presently.

"I did."

The waitress approached with a tray that gleamed in the moonlight; her white apron gleamed, her teeth, her shining collar and cuffs; she herself took on an air almost of mystery. She seemed to move more lightly. There was a little rustic table which she drew toward the hammoëk, and on which she placed the tray. She withdrew.

A church clock at the other end of the village struck ten.

"Women are very cruel," thought Rutherford, flicking the ash from his cigarette. "Time's flying. When can we repeat this evening? It might have been perfect; she's spoiling it all. Is it a whim? Or is she sorry she came after all? Soon I'll have to take her back."

He straightened himself, and glanced round. There was no second seat. The

little table was obviously flimsy. "Is there room for me in the hammock?" he said. "Should you mind?"

She made a gracious sound of assent in which he found the false note, and moving to one side, she stopped swinging. Rutherford sat down beside her. Their shoulders touched as the hammock swayed gently.

"You are not being very kind to me this evening," he said.

"That's like a man," she murmured, "you always want a girl to be up to concert pitch."

"Not I!" said Rutherford. "But there is something between us to-night. You won't talk to me."

"I'll talk to you about anything and everything under the moon."

"Yes, I know; dancing, scandal, your millinery, the probable starters for the Derby, and so on."

"I can find other topics, no doubt, if you have worn out all those."

"You and I haven't had to look for topics for conversation, before."

"I suppose we've run through the matters which interest us both."

Rutherford became angry and very quiet. She suddenly sensed his anger. It seemed curiously to dwarf her own, and yet she had been so angry, too. She thought of escape, remembering that the church clock had struck ten.

"Well," she said, breaking the silence, "charming as this is, I suppose we can't stay here forever. We have to drive back."

"Presently," said Rutherford. "I can get you to your door in an hour and a quarter at this time of night"

"That doesn't give us much longer here."

"So little longer that I'm going to try straightaway to get at what's worrying you. Is it anything I can help?"

"Thank you; but no."

"Is it anything to do with the business?"

"The business flourishes. We took

ten guineas yesterday morning, five in the afternoon, and twenty guineas to-day. And Mademoiselle Duplessis—clever thing!—makes hats out of nothing."

"That sounds good. So it's not the business?"

"Certainly not. At this rate, I'll soon be able to pay off your loan."

"Child! that's not what you're thinking of? You're not feeling constrained with me because of a little money. Money's such dirty stuff! Just nothing!"

"No, no; please don't let your imagination loose like that. I assure you, everything flourishes in every department of life. Life's good."

"You don't think so just now. I know you."

"I beg your pardon. Our acquaintance is a pretty limited one."

"Thanks. All the same, I know you. I know when you're sorry; I know when you're glad, hide it as you may."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! And woman's chief business is to dissemble."

"Woman's chief business is nothing so silly. Well, we seem to be getting at the trouble by the simple process of elimination."

"Such a slow process that we'll have to leave before it's through."

"Oh, we'll see about that," said Rutherford. "I may keep you here prisoner till you inform against yourself. Well—it isn't business; it isn't the loan making you feel cautious with me. Are you wondering whether you'll change your mind?"

"About what?"

Rutherford looked down at his clasped hands resting over his knees. She stole a glance at him and saw the suspicion of a wry smile on his face.

"About—well—your plans for life generally."

"I don't believe you're speaking generally, Mr. Rutherford. You've got something particular in your mind."

"Well, then, I have. You may think I have no right to ask; I think I have a right; so here it is: When I was last in that wonderful establishment of yours, Cox was there, too."

"Yes."

"You know, when two people have a close mutual understanding, they rather make other people in the same room feel interlopers, out of it. That's the feeling you gave me the other day. And I rather wondered then and I've gone on wondering since, whether you and he are arriving, after all, at that close, mutual understanding."

"I've known him a long time."

"You've been acquainted with him a long time, yes."

"What d'you mean?"

"Girls like you don't really know men of his stamp very well. You may, after you marry them; I don't know. If you do, you keep it to yourselves then."

Rosa felt from head to foot like a flame.

"Wyn," she thought, "*he didn't give him away!*" Wyngate suddenly stood out in her vision, the chivalrous gentleman with the quiet tongue, a man who refused to stab in the back.

She swung a foot.

"What d'you mean?" she asked.

Rutherford caught the tiny choke in her voice, and his heart became like lead. She cared for Cox, then? Impossible! And then he began telling himself for his own discipline that women did strange things, things which seemed impossible, and were not, directly a woman was in question. His hands tightened on one another.

He counterquestioned:

"Are you going to marry Cox?"

Her hesitation seemed to answer; and before she spoke, he rushed on:

"If you are, well—you are. I can do nothing, say nothing. But I always thought you genuine in all you professed."

"In all I professed?"

"I imagined you as taking a high standard for a man. I couldn't imagine you ever being persuaded to lower it. I was so convinced of the idea that——"

She was silent, looking before her.

"Shall I go on?" asked Rutherford.

"Oh, yes," she said in a bleak voice. "Oh, yes. Go on."

"That," said Rutherford, turning to her, "ever since I met you in France I thought you required the best of a man—I—how shall I put it? I've tried to live up to the standards I thought you set. Stupidly as I let you go right out of my life, I had a sort of instinct that you'd walk back into it again; and against that moment I—I—tried to please you. I am giving you a poor sort of explanation of all that I mean; I can't explain better. But——"

"Isn't it all a little beside the point?" whispered the girl.

"What?" said Rutherford, leaning forward to catch her words.

"I said: isn't it all a little beside the point?"

"Oh," said Rutherford.

After a moment's hesitation he turned to her and said in a quiet voice:

"If you are going to marry Cox, I won't say what I want to say. It is too early for it, anyway. I wanted you to find your feet first; learn what independence was for a woman; and then ask yourself fairly: 'Well, which is best? If you were unhampered, you could give yourself a fair answer. Women get too little opportunity to be fair to themselves.'"

"That's true," murmured Rosa.

"You would have had it," said Rutherford. "You've struck out for yourself. Prospects promise well, if you'll work; if you'll stick at it. I hoped you'd stand by your guns, but if you're going to marry Cox, it means, I suppose, that you've already tired in anticipation, and that you're surrendering them. Hardly a shot fired, too!"

"You take a great deal on supposition!" said Rosa in a fury.

"Oh, dear, dear girl!" said Rutherford, "do give me the lie! Tell me it isn't so."

"I can tell you nothing," replied the girl with a little shrug of apathy.

"Talk to me, anyway; talk with me. Tell me why you're so different to-day from the Rosa of a week ago. Nothing's happened?"

"Nothing of importance," she replied deliberately.

"Then there's something? Some little thing—or a thousand little things? I know the little things! They're the biggest, really, in many cases. Why won't you talk to me, Rosa? Tell me just one of these devastating trifles that mean so much."

"One of them? I—I've learned something about some one."

"An illusion's gone?"

"A little faith has gone. I don't have illusions."

"I beg her pardon!" said Rutherford very tenderly and with a smile.

She saw the smile. It turned her to ice in a moment. He could be amused! Treat her like a child with whimsies! She lost her breath, struggled to regain it, and began on a level note:

"Mademoiselle Duplessis——"

Here she stopped.

Rutherford started. He looked at her very closely, leaning nearer. He looked at her hands trembling on her lap, but did not touch them.

"Rosa," he said.

The girl bit her lips. It was odious that she should long to weep.

"Rosa," said Rutherford, "do—do you know, then?"

The girl strove with the tempest within her.

"Know!" she stammered. "I know all there is to know, I think!"

"Then, Rosa?"

"I refuse to discuss it. I refuse to allow you to speak about it in any way."

"Well," said Rutherford, "my tongue is tied, naturally."

"Naturally," panted the girl.

"What do you mean, Rosa?"

"I won't discuss it. Leave me alone."

Rutherford laid his hand over her's. She withdrew them forcibly. With an effort he pulled himself together.

"Just one thing. You won't discuss it, and—you're reconsidering marrying Cox?"

"I am reconsidering it."

"For God's sake, Rosa!"

"Kindly don't be lurid."

"You can scoff! So, you must be rather like all women, after all."

"Why should I be different?"

"Oh! Why should you, indeed?"

"And how do you sum up 'all women'?"

"They're very like ostriches; they bury their heads not to see what they don't want to see. But I thought you too brave for that ostrich habit."

"I don't understand you."

"What a banality! That's not like you."

"You're too critical for such a hot evening, Mr. Rutherford. I want to laze and enjoy it all. I don't want to think."

"You must think."

"I entirely deny such an unpleasant necessity," said the girl frivolously.

Rutherford regarded her long and closely. She bore the regard without a tremor, looking back at him clear-eyed, a half-smile on her lips. She was in that peculiarly feminine state of exalted indignation in which a woman out of sheer defiance will give a man the lie right or wrongly white or black, with a laughing face.

"I, too, must be banal, and say: I don't understand you," said Rutherford, sore, and at a loss.

"We must postpone explanations, then," she responded lazily, "because, anyway, it's time to drive home."

"Of course. I'll get the car round."

"I'll be ready in a few minutes."

She walked saunteringly back toward the inn, Rutherford following close. Her movements, as well as her voice, seemed to express a sort of studied, defiant deliberation. He looked at the nape of her white neck snowed over by moonlight, with the black coil of hair resting just above it; at the fine line of her shoulders, and the turn of her cheek, pale under the same silver snow; and it was a hard matter to him to keep his hands in his pockets where he had thrust them. They longed to be out, and around her, holding her in spite of her furious will set against them. He ached to step forward a pace, and kiss her neck between the low collar of her frock and the shining coil of black hair. But he let her go. She walked more quickly as they rounded the corner of the path and came in sight of the inn door, and nodding lightly over her shoulder, she went in.

Up again in the humbly simple dressing room with the muslin-hung table, she stared fiercely into the glass. Her cheek bones blazed red, her eyes were shining and big. "My God!" she said half aloud, "I mustn't look like this!" She dabbed at her face with a powder puff, smoothing out the hectic spots, but her eyes were still brilliant as glass, and as blank. They were the eyes of a person suffering till he has forgotten the origin of his suffering, and merely continues, unquestioning, to endure it, perhaps even blunted to the pain. Until she saw her own eyes, Rosa hardly realized she was feeling, suffering. But now, she closed her lids for a moment over the eyeballs, and opened them again, after the tiny respite of darkness, thinking: "Now! Isn't that better?"

But her eyes still remained wide, bright, as if they proclaimed her naked soul.

She pulled on her close hat and tied a veil over it. The veil softened her

face to a sort of cream rose blurred behind a mist. She heard Rutherford's horn faintly sounded below.

She drew aside the funny curtains, crackling with starch, and looked out into the moonlight. The low pur of the engine rose to her. The car waited at the garden gates, out in the road snowed by moonlight. Its piercing headlights sent slightly warmer beams through the whiteness. Rutherford sat at the wheel, motionless and patient. The girl's eyes were all for him. Before she knew, she had repressed a sob.

Her fury rose.

She became deadly calm, and went down to the car. Rutherford saw to her comfort with all his usual care. They rushed off up the white road, heading for town.

It was late; soon it would be midnight; and it was moonlight. But it all meant nothing. The girl thought:

"Life's a stale business, after all."

The man said to himself: "She's cruel. In a way, all women are."

They drove in a bleak silence.

At last Rutherford spoke, in a dull sounding voice: "I suppose we—we're friends?"

The girl weighed her words; he saw her counting them out. "How she grudges a man a crumb!" he thought, and resentment seized him.

She said slowly: "Friendship—that's a thing that takes time to grow. Acquaintance is another matter."

"The preliminary, often, to a splendid friendship."

"Sometimes."

"You are shutting yourself right away from me!" said Rutherford hotly.

"I tell you: I don't know what you mean."

"You know well enough!"

Savagely he gave the car more throttle. It accelerated, and they tore over a long stretch of main road, empty of traffic. Ahead of them now they saw the outpost lights of London.

Rutherford was in the ferment of a man disappointed and baffled. He had no decisions made. He had planned an evening of pure delight; that dream was over. And now, he was uncertain of his way. He had meant to try to see her again to-morrow. But now, could he see her again to-morrow? Was she going to be to him then what she had been to-night, so strange, so cold, capricious, light, hard? Even if he served to-morrow and many to-morrows, had she anything for him at the end?

She reconsidered Wyngate Cox. Cox was going to win after all, was he?

"What *are* women made of?" Rutherford thought. "Have they any morality any ethics at all? Do they always haul down their standards in the dust? Are they always so easily converted to convenience?"

Thinking, and thinking always fruitlessly, he drove through the streets. Rosa lay back beside him, calm and cool, far-away, lofty as a goddess. And before he had answered any of his own questions, they were at her house.

For a moment both sat uncertainly, as if waiting, in the palpitating car, after it had come to a standstill. Rutherford moved first. Alighting, he stood to help her. And she rose and stepped out and stood on the curb beside him.

She held out a hand. The very form and touch of it were pure conventionality.

"Thank you, Mr. Rutherford. It's been such a charming time!"

"It hasn't been a very happy evening," said Rutherford.

She murmured.

"A woman," said Rutherford, "will be in a cruel mood, a squandering mood, and recklessly she will squander the best things in life."

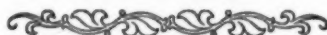
She murmured, "Good night." Her smile was enigmatic to him, expressing nothing. To her, it meant nothing, either. It was the smile which, in moments of heartbreak, decently veils a woman's face. Her throat felt constricted, dry. She moved toward the door.

"Let me open it for you," said Rutherford coldly, taking her latchkey.

Somehow, to both, it seemed impossible that the door should shut between them. But the sound of its closing, soft, resolute, merciless, came two seconds after the key had turned in the lock. She stood just within the hall, listening and throbbing, listening for the sound of the car starting away. It was longer than she thought it would be, for Rutherford was rather like a man dazed; his movements were slow, his brain slow, and when he mounted the car again, his hand was slow, fumbling at the gears. But at length came the sound for which the girl waited on the other side of the door. The car moved off. Rutherford did not guess how Rosa was standing there, quivering. He thought once more: "Oh, what wicked squanderers women are!"

The divine loveliness had left the white night; she had destroyed it.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



LEAVES

THE first leaves falling with the autumn's breath
Are nature's fragile children, doomed to death;
But leaves, undaunted 'neath the frosty sky,
Are clothed with gold and purple ere they die.

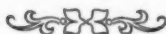
WILLIAM HAMILTON HAYNE.



The White Peacock

By Nancy Boyd

Author of the "Seventh Stair,"
"The Dark Horse," etc.



TAKE thy hand from my knee," said Antoinette Devilfish-Moonflower du Forêt, "and eat thy rice! *Regarde*, thee breaks the little stick in two, having care that the small toothpick which is concealed within shall not fly forth and be lost, and then thee—how shall I say—thee *whets* the sticks one against the other a moment, and eats, *comme ça*!" She tilted the little wooden bowl in her hand and began to eat swiftly, clicking the chopsticks together.

"Ah! but see, what pity—one forgets altogether the soup!" Setting down the rice, she crossed the floor hastily on her knees and returned to her cushion, sliding along before her the lacquer tray with its two covered bowls.

"Behold, John Bailey!" She lifted the two covers simultaneously in her two hands, and stared across at him through a cloud of steam. In each black bowl was a hot broth of gray water in which were standing upright four curved white shells.

"Clams!" he exclaimed gratefully, discarding his tasteless and almost inaccessible mountain of rice, and lifted them out with his fingers.

After a moment, looking up, he caught her eyes watching him. Slanting eyes she had, black as obsidian, and narrowed by the lower lid which lifted up over the iris in such a way that John Bailey often had the uncomfort-

able feeling that she was peering at him over a wall.

She laughed at once.

"Eat quickly," she said. "There are bamboo sprouts yet to come, cooked with shrimps, and a most sour salad."

She leaned forward on the fingers of one hand, the thumb lifted, like a monkey's, and poured tea into tiny handleless cups.

He could not eat for looking at her, she was so lovely, with her slim, lithely twisting body, her quaint, extravagant posturing, and the blue shadows beneath her cheek bones.

He pushed the tray from between them so abruptly that the dishes rattled, and, throwing his arms about her waist, dragged her, swinging, to her feet. Then he lifted her high off the floor, and stood for a moment with closed eyes, bending backward, so that her body was heavy upon him.

Suddenly he felt her slide down through his arms to the floor again. He stooped to her at once, breathing audibly, but she had already risen and was halfway across the room.

"Do not do that!" she cried, tossing back her head and giving to her body a long shake of displeasure. "See, I permit thee to return again, after thy—thy stupidity of last week, and *v'la*! This is what I receive! *Animal*!"

"I am sorry," said John Bailey, awkwardly kicking at a cushion. "But

you are beautiful, and I love you," he continued stubbornly, looking at her, "and when both these facts occur to me at the same time, I can't help putting my arms around you; and I shall do it every time I get the chance."

"Ah, well, what matter? I forgive thee! I shall only not so often provide thee with thy chance, John Bailey. Sit down and eat. I have finished. It is not that the food is poisoned, but that I have no hunger." She laughed and, bending her knees, sank slowly to the floor, drawing a cushion under her as she did so. Then, reaching for her samisen, she began to sing, to its accompaniment, a pleasant but undistinguishable air, sitting back upon her heels, her head erect, her eyes expressionless, pressing down the strings with an enormous, wedge-shaped tortoise-shell pick, and from time to time turning her head rigidly to observe the fingers of her left hand, which were independently busy at the end of the long, slender instrument.

"*Adana é gao ni
Mayo wanu mono wa,
Ki butsu kana butsu
Ishi Botoke!*"

"What may that mean?" asked John.

"Oh, it is to say," the girl replied, laying down her samisen, and fitting about it the little plush covers which were always sliding off, "it is to say that—that he who loves not the smiling face, if he be not made of wood, is then a stone Buddha. However, I should perhaps not have told thee. It is perhaps an encouragement; and it is my desire to restrain thee."

Opening wide her arms, she spread their great sleeves demurely on the floor beside her, her thumbs crooked from sight under the padded hems, and her fingers reticently but elegantly exposed. Then, leaning backward, her head so sidewise that one cheek nearly touched her shoulder, she regarded him for a moment over the lower lids of

her eyes. Then she sat up straight and, drawing from her obi a fan of white peacock feathers, snapped it open with a little whirl as of startled wings, and began to fan herself languidly.

"I wonder," mused John Bailey aloud, looking at her quietly. He had very early discarded his chopsticks and taken to eating with his fingers, holding the shrimps by their tails and biting at them. Now he got up from the floor, the joints of his cramped legs giving forth a sharp, cracking sound as he did so.

"*Parole*, but thee is old and stiff!"

Mademoiselle du Forêt reached for a large red lacquer nut bowl which was on a low chest against the wall, and for some moments ate Li-Chee nuts solemnly, crunching the thin shells in her hand and spitting the stones across the room into the fireplace.

"I wonder," said John Bailey again, going over to the chest and seating himself upon it.

"It is a good thing to wonder," Moonflower reflected, industriously crushing and extracting. "People are in this world of two kinds—the wondering and the stupid. As for me"—she thrust one hand suddenly into the sleeve of her kimono—"I wonder if thee would like the flavor of this."

She leaned toward him, supported by one hand, and held up a cube of opaque brownish jelly.

"What is it?" he asked distrustfully.

"It is *yokan*. It is a paste made of beans. It is very subtle."

He took it from her with suspicion and, after looking it over, bit into it.

"H'm, I guess it must be," he said then, regarding the place whence he had bitten. "I can't taste it at all. It's—it's just sort of unpleasantly mealy, and like slightly sweetened water. Do you mind if I smoke?"

"But no, of course not! However, give it me back if thee does not like it. I eat it greedily."

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She went over to the great circular bed and lay down on her side, taking the nut bowl into the crook of her arm and gazing down into it with interest, poking the nuts about with a critical finger and now and then taking a bite of the sweetmeat.

This bed on which she reclined was like nothing John Bailey had ever seen until two weeks before, when he had first visited the girl in her room. It was circular in shape, like the half of an enormous barrel, set on its side into a low platform. When lying in it one's heels and head were slightly raised; and the curved canopy overhead completed the circle. The bed was made of carved teakwood, and the canopy of transparent yellow silk and mother-of-pearl. There was a bolster at the head and at the foot, the ends of which were octagonal plates of silver, heavily carved, and at the back, which corresponded to the bottom of the barrel, only the front of the bed being left open, were panels of Chinese tapestry.

John Bailey's eyes traveled about the great room, taking in the paper *shoji* which screened off the door to his hostess' kitchenette and bath, the sandalwood chest, the little teakwood table with its inkstone, writing paper, and brush, the toilet case on the floor—a round mirror of polished brass, supported by a tiny easel with lacquered legs—the intricately carved cabinet, on which squatted a large Buddha with a Roman Catholic rosary hanging from his neck, the curious contrivance over the door—many narrow, different lengths of tapestry with bells on the ends of them, sewn together—to scare away the demons, and close by, on the wall, between two beautiful *kakemonos*, an ivory crucifix. In addition to the Chinese bed, along one side of the room was a half-unrolled Japanese bed with a wooden pillow, on which lay a tiny bamboo tray of kumquats, and a prayer book in French. And behind this bed,

between it and the wall, was an immense Koromandel screen, twelve compartments of teakwood, deeply carved, the recesses in the carving marvelously painted in red, yellow, and blue, and the surface of the carving lacquered black. This screen was so tall as to reach nearly to the ceiling and so wide as practically to hide that whole side of the room. It stood out about two feet from the wall, and was quite evidently kept there to conceal something.

"Yes," said Antoinette Devilfish-Moonflower du Forêt with a sigh, as she watched his face perusing the room, "I am, am I not, a what is call *hybrid*, yes, what you other English would say, *hash!* Ah, yes. Thee sees! I do not know if I told thee, did I, John Bailey?"

"You did not," he returned with certainty, and some grimness.

"Ah, no!"

She sat up and put one foot to the floor, a small foot in a white cloth shoe shaped like a mitten, the great toe being separated from the others. She looked remarkably like a little girl swinging herself to and fro in a hammock.

"Eh, bien, thee sees, *mon ami!* I was born in Paris, a long time—that is to say, a few days ago,"—she laughed merrily—"from a Chinese princess *maman* and a papa that was son to a *vaurien français*, a what is call millionnaire, and a Japan geisha. *Quel mélange, n'est-ce pas?*" She laughed again.

Then, instantly her face sobered.

"They are both dead now," she said softly, and slipping to the floor went prostrate on her knees, her hands spread out before her and turning inward, in the Japanese attitude of devotion.

"*Donnez-leur le repos éternel, Seigneur; et que la lumière éternelle luise sur eux!*" she mumbled rapidly aloud. Then, sitting back on her feet, she continued:

"Until I had twelve years I was by my father kept in a convent, and the

blessed sisters cared for me. I seldom saw my mother in those days. But one morning she came for me, alone, ah, so beautiful, all in so many colors—I was proud, the children stared so at her—and took me away. And for two years I was with her in her palace in Canton. Ah, *mon ami*, what beauty! Such flowers! Not called as here—my God!—'Sweet William'—she screamed with laughter—"and 'Dorothy Perkins,' but 'Water-asleep-in-the-moon,' *cher ami*, and 'I-loved-my-love-in-the-garden!'"

"The garden of my mother was made by Li-Pé-Hang. Does thee know what that is to say, John Bailey? *Mais non*, how should thee?"

"And there were there three *kiosques* of different size," she continued, "with roofs incurved and pointed, and a great Buddha of stone sitting in the sunshine, crowned always with lotus flowers and noisy with swallows that made nests in him. And, ah!"—she rose to her feet and stood tall before her visitor, her black eyes wide open for an instant and blazing, unfocused, staring at the Koromandel screen—"there was one white, white *peon*—how is it—*peacock*, in the courtyard, that I feared, and ran from, and loved, and followed. He died."

She stood motionless after she had finished speaking. Then she turned and sank to her knees with a little, pleasant laugh.

"Ah, but what is this to thee? The rest, in the shell of a nut, is here: I lived then in Japan with my father, one year at his parents' house in Kanazawa, and two years in Yedo, after which he brought me here to this America. And because he had grown mad in his mind with thinking, and feared always for my so strange soul if I should continue, as he said, a worshiper of idols, he bade me forswear forever great Buddha, and Shaka, and my holy ancestors, and even his own Sainte Vierge Marie and Jesus Christ, her son, and my Saint Antoine

de Padoue, and to love God simply, simply, and he put me here into a Quaker school." She laughed, then hid her face in her hands.

"It is what you call funny," she sobbed, "but it has no joy! Last year he died, and my mother had died long before that, and I was alone and did not know what to do! O, *Saint Antoine, père des orphelins et des abandonnés!*" She put her face on her knees, and wept.

John Bailey lifted her from the floor and, carrying her to the bed, laid her gently down. Then he knelt beside her.

"Listen, dear," he said. "I love you! You are not alone, because I love you! And I thought you loved me, too, a little. I don't know just why. But if you only did—oh, *Toinette*, what difference does it make who's—who's king of Heaven, if we only love each a little here on earth? I could make you so happy, darling, so very happy, if you'd only let me! And you would forget all about these candles and gods and crucifixes and litanies, and—*and spells*, *Toinette!* You wouldn't need them, dear. You wouldn't have to worship so much if you'd only let yourself love a little. Oh, my Moonflower, my dearest, won't you trust me? Won't you give yourself to me?"

"*Chéri*," the girl murmured softly, and laid a cool cheek against his forehead. Instantly he lifted his face and set his mouth to hers; then, half rising, his lips clinging to her own, he stooped above her in a kiss the weight of which pressed her head deep into the pillow.

"*Toinette, Toinette!*" he cried, raising his head and looking down at her face, an exquisite pale oval with closed eyes, an ivory medallion.

He kissed her again. Then he arose and, walking across the room, stood for some time regarding intently a Hiroshige landscape which he did not see at all.

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Returning to her side, he stood looking down at her. She was lying with her face to the round back of the bed.

"Toinette," he said, "why can't you love me? Are you afraid?"

"No," she replied instantly.

"Do—you love some other man?"

"No."

"Don't you love me at all?"

"Oh, yes"—she turned her head and looked up at him—"it must be that I love thee, John Bailey, and very much," she said quietly, "else how should I feel toward thee as I do now—my blood singing through my veins, and beating in my breasts, and somehow—somehow through all my body a great emptiness of thee!"

"Toinette!"

"No, no! Wait! Ah, but yet for a moment kiss me! *Ah, mon très cher, oui, je t'aime, je t'aime follement et je te désire! Je te désire!* But there is something beyond thee that I love that keeps me from thee, something more full of strangeness. There is so simple! If thee were three men, I might love thee wholly!"

She thrust him off and sat up, then stood, resting her hand on his shoulder, and drew from her obi the little white fan, which she pressed against her cheek. Into her eyes again, as he watched her, came that strange look of passionate surrender to something he did not see.

John Bailey rose, holding her to him with an arm about her waist, and seized the fan from her fingers.

"Damn it!" he said irritably, between his teeth, and slammed the little trinket down upon the floor.

She screamed and sank into a small heap beside it, catching it up and crooning over it with curious little guttural words.

"Go away! Pig!" she cried suddenly, pointing to the door. "Go, before I kill thee!" She twisted her body about like a serpent and reared up beside him, her

eyes darting flames. He recoiled involuntarily.

"Toinette, don't, dear!" he exclaimed, and put one hand over his eyes.

She laughed, and thrust the fan back into her obi.

"Pardon," she said lightly. "I did not mean to frighten thee. Ah-h-h!" For at that he had started toward her with bloodshot eyes, his face white as chalk.

"Do not touch me! Do not dare to touch me!" she screamed. Then, as he still came toward her, she made a swift, low lunge forward, caught him about the knees and threw her whole weight against his legs. He slipped on the polished floor, and came down with a crash across the tea tray, clutching at the air.

In an instant he was on his feet again. But she was nowhere to be seen. There was no sign of life in the room. It was like a room into which nobody had stepped foot for years, except that a little Swiss clock which he had not noticed before was ticking calmly on the mantel above the fireplace.

He drew aside the *shoji* with a quick movement and looked out into the kitchen. It was very white and shiny and empty, as was also the bathroom.

He returned and threw open the door into the hall, glancing up and down rapidly. There was no one in sight. As he stepped back into the room his eyes fell on the great screen against the farther wall. He strode over to it and pushed it aside.

She was prostrate on her knees behind it, facing the wall, her hands outspread on the floor. On either side of her was a large, unlighted stone lantern and before her was a carved soapstone plate containing the embers of incense. Covering the wall was an immense Chinese embroidery; on a black ground shot with threads of gold, a white peacock, with a sensuous, languid body, and a cruel head, on which sat like a

crown a fan-shaped jeweled aigrette, and from which winked and leered a slanting, ruby eye.

"God help me," said John Bailey, and, letting his head drop forward, he groped his way out of the room.

At midnight he returned, having spent the three hours of the interim pacing up and down the streets of the city, seeing no one and stared at by all. He came back because he could not keep away.

As he was about to ring, he saw that the door to the house was ajar. He pushed it open and mounted the two flights of stairs to Antoinette's room.

Hearing a voice speaking, he paused with his hand outstretched to knock. It was 'Toinette.

"*Ah, toi que j'adore!*" she was saying, or moaning, rather, in a voice piercingly sweet, unbearably caressing. John Bailey's knowledge of French was slight, but he caught now and then a phrase of what she was saying.

"Oh, my life, my little heart, my white one! Is it that you are mine, or not, in this moment, my terrible and proud? See, I touch you—you do not scream at me; I lay my hand on your body, you do not tear my flesh! It is because you are dead! Dead! Yes, yes, my dear one, that is it! I fear you no longer, no! See what I dare to do! Ah, but I hate you, oh, I hate you so much, my adored one! I stroke you, I ruffle your soft side, I kiss your cold, red eye!"

John Bailey stood for what seemed to him a long time, with his hand on the knob of the door. He had thought at first, when he recognized her voice, to go in. But something had restrained him. A curiosity, perhaps, to hear her through; to see what she would do next; to learn, if possible, what it was all actually about. In addition to this was a surging and blinding jealousy of this thing, this bird, this presence, what-

ever it was, which she loved more than she loved him. His brain swam; he tried to think.

When finally he turned the knob very softly and entered the room, 'Toinette was lying face down on the floor. At first sight, she seemed to have fainted. But as he looked at her, a sudden shudder passed over her from head to foot, then another, and then for a moment her whole slender body vibrated delicately, like a string which gives forth tone.

He went up to her and turned her roughly over on her back.

"What ails you?" he said.

Her eyes, over whose blackness there seemed to have been drawn a film of mist, stared up at him without recognition or interest. Her face was deathly white, her lips open. Only her nostrils appeared to be still alive.

His eyes went from her prostrate body to the peacock on the wall behind her.

"You damned thing!" he shouted, and reached out as if to snatch it down.

'Toinette wriggled swiftly to her knees and across the floor. She reached up her arms to cover the white bird, and glared around at him.

"Get away from there!" yelled John Bailey, and pulled her back by the shoulder. Then, wrenching the embroidery from the wall, he lifted a candle from one of the lanterns and held it to the edge of the cloth.

She shrieked, and tried to blow out the light of the candle. But he held her easily off at arm's length until he had succeeded in starting a sufficient blaze. Then he tossed the burning armorful into the fireplace and, seizing 'Toinette in his arms, bore her to the bed and held her there until the thing was ashes. Feeling under his arm, as he sat there, the little fan in her obi, he had drawn it out and thrown it also upon the pyre.

As the room grew darker under the expiring flame, she ceased struggling

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and began to sob. When the fire was quite dead she leaned over him and stared at the fireplace for a moment. Then she looked into John Bailey's eyes, a sidelong look. When she looked away, he caught her instantly in his arms.

The light of the remaining lantern sputtered and went out.

"I am going now, dear," said John Bailey, leaning over her and smiling, a serious smile of tenderness and wonder. Light was coming in through the chinks in the curtains and from the street there arose sounds of the day.

"All right," said Toinette du Forêt, and turned her back on him. "I wish to sleep," she added.

Then, immediately she flung up her arms and drew his face down to hers.

"Ah, but I love thee! I love thee so much!" she cried. "Do not go; stay here with me; I was angry, only, that thee could think of going. Dost thee love me? Really? Say it again! Say it eight times, John Bailey, and I will give thee all the kisses I have left!"

"But I have to go," he said desperately, taking his lips from hers. "If I didn't *have* to, nothing on earth could force me away. It is the last time I shall ever leave you. Oh, Toinette, Toinette, I cannot believe it! Oh, how shall I bear this happiness without you all day long!"

"Thee may leave a little here with me, lover, and come back for it to-night," said Toinette. "Eleven o'clock, shall thee be returned by then?"

"Yes, oh, surely, by then! Eleven o'clock, dearest."

He looked at her worshipfully for a moment, then stooping, laid a light kiss on both her eyes and went softly from the room.

At ten o'clock that night, John Bailey returned. As he approached her door, he heard her voice again as on the

precious evening, but an accusing voice, and reproachful:

*"Saint Antoine de Padoue,
Grand voleur, grand filou,
Rendez-moi ce qui n'est pas à vous!"*

He opened the door noiselessly and went in, his heart sinking.

She was kneeling on the floor before the bare wall where the embroidery had been accustomed to hang. In front of her was a brass bowl surrounded by six lighted candles. In her hands she held a little image of Saint Anthony.

"Give me back my peacock!" she cried, and shook the little figure. "Give him me back! Give him me back! Six candles I burn to thee, and one every night for a fortnight I promise, and all this, that thee but restore to me what thee has stolen! Give him me back!"

She laid her forehead on the floor and waited. After a moment she lifted her head and kissed the image.

"There is a sweet little saint," she said. "Ah, I am so happy! One every night for a fortnight. I shall not forget! And incense, maybe, also, which I shall steal from Buddha who sleeps always."

She turned sharply, aware, for the first time, that she was not alone, then rose to her feet, clasping the brass bowl close and covering it with the sleeve of her kimono.

"Do not approach me, John Bailey," she said, softly. "I pity thee; and I wish thee good fortune. But I do not love thee! I tell thee this at once, in cruelty, for I pity thee, and would have thee find for thyself soon a lovely lady with yellow hair, that is but one lady always, and does not change at all!"

"Toinette! You mean to say it—it is over?"

"Eh, bien, oui. C'est ça. I do not love thee! I could not! Thee is too simple. If thee were three men, perhaps, but thee is not, and there thee is!"

"But Toinette, after last night, dearest, you can't mean that——"

"Last night—pouf! What was it? A man and a woman in each other's arms! Sweet, yes—perhaps you call ecstasy, but, la! not rare! As for me—ah, I slept after a little, and dreamed, and it was not of thee. I shall never love thee, John Bailey!"

He went up to her and looked closely into her face.

"All right," he said finally, "good-by!" He started away.

"Oh, but I don't see what I'm going to do," he cried, turning back to her,

"if I have to give you up! Oh, sweet-heart, are you sure you couldn't grow to care? There's nothing between us, is there? Not now?" he added, glancing at the bare wall.

She was silent.

"What's that you've got there?" he asked sharply, seeing that she was holding something covered up in her arms.

She stood motionless a moment, then slowly, with her eyes on his, lifted her sleeve from the brass bowl.

It was the ashes of the white peacock.



ELEGY BEFORE DEATH

THERE will be rose and rhododendron
When you are dead and underground;
Still will be heard from white-syringas
Heavy with bees, a sunny sound;

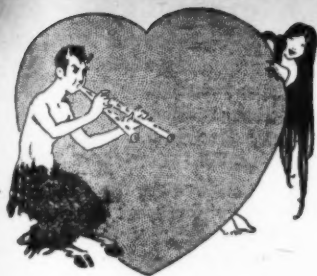
Still will the tamaracks be raining
After the rain has ceased, and still
Will there be robins in the stubble,
Brown sheep upon the warm, green hill.

Spring will not ail, nor autumn falter,
Nothing will know that you are gone,
Saving alone some sullen plowland
None but yourself sets foot upon;

Saving the mayweed and the pigweed
Nothing will know that you are dead—
These, and perhaps a useless wagon
Standing beside some tumbled shed.

Oh, there will pass with your great passing
Little of beauty not your own;
Only the light from common water,
Only the grace from simple stone!

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



Romany Hearts

By Louise Rice

Author of "The Never-Used Room," etc.

III.—A Kosko Gorgio

RICHARDS suffered from an imagination which had too little exercise. He was a broker in New York, and a successful one, but the moment that his mind was released from the treadmill of business, it busied itself insistently with romance and adventure. And the tricks which it played upon Richards, in those unregulated hours, amazed and often frightened him; for romance and adventure, being rather hard to meet with, his mind got just as much enjoyment as children do out of playing make believe. There would not have been much harm in that, if it had not also taken delight in retailing those fairy tales as actual experiences.

Listening to his own voice, there in the candle-shaded dining room of the country inn, Richards recognized that his tongue was running away with him, again. Somebody had said that there was a tribe of gypsies encamped near by, and that had started him off. Once, several years before, he had really talked for an hour with an old woman in a gypsy camp, and she had taught him some words of her talk, and told him a few things which had thrilled him. That was about as near to a real adventure as he had ever got, but his imaginative mind had painted up the picture considerably, and greatly enjoyed it. Of course, he had read Borrow and such few articles on gypsies as he could find in the magazines; and

now he was spinning out a great yarn about that strange race, talking about members of it whom he knew, and discussing their mysterious and secret rites as though he, himself, had seen them.

The two ladies at his table, with one of whom he had a slight, bowing acquaintance, gave him such eager attention that he was really inspired. "You're an awful liar, my boy, but you do it artistically," one side of his agile mind said to him; while the other side all but believed that some of those fascinating things had actually happened.

Conversation had been going on in the informally intimate way peculiar to small, well-kept country inns. Everybody talked to everybody, although formal introductions had not been made; so, pretty soon, as people near Richards heard what he was saying, they began to pull their chairs a little nearer, and to listen, and question. By that time Richards was enjoying himself too much even subconsciously to remember that he was indulging in his most daring flight of fancy. Chiefly, he was drawn on by the deep, dark, intent eyes of the younger of the two ladies, whom he took to be a foreigner, despite the ease of her English. There was something exotic about her, something not to be defined in words, but easily felt. Perhaps it was strongest in her eyes, which had that mysterious look which is imparted by the odd, heavy, cut look

of the outer eyelid, so noticeable in the Chinese.

She was very quietly dressed, in a dark, well-made little gown. She wore no jewelry. Her face was creamy olive in its healthy pallor. Her hands were delicate and well cared for. Item by item, as he talked, and even as he all but hypnotized himself into believing what he told, John Thomas Richards, whose father had been a keen and accurate observer, reverted to type, and strove to analyze the impression which this quiet, almost unsmiling girl gave him. How was it that he seemed to feel a radiance, a sort of shimmering glow, about her? What was there in the movement of her little head, with its heavy crown of blue-black hair, which was deliciously, thrillingly alien and sweet? And her voice—dropping its occasional colloquial remark into the stream of his talk—*what* was the cadence which rang faintly in it?

The other woman was older. He knew who she was—a teacher of English literature in the Dover High School. She had blue, whimsical eyes, and he guessed her to be less impressionable than her companion. Once, a chill ran through him as he thought he saw laughter ripple subtly over her face. He stopped and found that he could not go on as well as before.

"It seems to me I'm talking a lot," he said finally, looking around. "Really I—I'm sure there's a great deal I have yet to learn about those people. They—well, I suppose there's a great deal about them that no one, at all, knows."

"It doesn't seem possible that there could be anything to be known, any more fascinating than the things you have told us," remarked the teacher of English.

That time he was sure. She could not quite keep the laughter out of her voice. But the younger woman leaned forward impulsively.

"Life is so dull, often," she said softly, "that anything—good stories—song—friendship—is welcome. Most people don't understand how to make the hours go swiftly; but there are some who know. It is good to speak from the heart, isn't it?"

He felt the color come into his face, and knew that he was staring. Now, there was surely something foreign about her; not exactly in her voice, but in the way she expressed herself. And what did she mean, anyway? His imagination, having taken him that far, suddenly took flight and left him, speechless and red—not inarticulate, though, for his eyes spoke for him. They implored and questioned and admired, as they looked straight into the beautiful, dark ones which looked back at him. People were rising to go. The orchestra began to play in the big veranda, where there was dancing after dinner. The woman and the girl arose. The woman passed on, but the girl lingered just a second, as Richards stood, with his hand on the back of his chair. A smile was creeping over her face.

"Anyway, you're a *kosko gorgio*, even if you do pull the long bow a little," she murmured.

He could hardly believe that he had really heard that amazing remark! For a long time after she had passed on, the dining room was deserted by all but the waiters, and Richards continued to stand, utterly confounded, and unable to accept the conviction which had flashed upon him. That girl, herself, was a gypsy. Yes, sir! And she had been making the biggest fool of John Thomas Richards. And yet, she had smiled not unkindly. There had even been a sort of friendliness in the teasing glance with which she had left him.

For all his thirty years of healthy masculinity, he had not often been conscious of the call of a woman's eyes. Romance had beckoned him from ships,

and from alien races, and from brave and heroic deeds, and from mystery, but a certain shyly reverent and tender strain in him had kept him aloof from amorous adventures. His instinctive and instant following of the girl was, therefore, entirely without conscious purpose. Blindly, as though she held a cord to which he was attached, he walked out of the room, following the two figures across the veranda, down the steps, and down the path which led to the deep ravine where the falls were. And all the time his mind was groping, trying to piece out the puzzle. The teacher was stopping at the inn, but the girl had not been there before. They were close friends, but he had never heard of a gypsy coming into rather an exclusive inn—and he had never even dreamed of *such* a gypsy girl! Strangely enough, he did not question the fact, although the two words of gypsy talk which she had used, are, perhaps, the only two which are generally known. She had called him a "good stranger."

Below the inn lies the deep gash in the hills, through which the river falls, to join the old canal, many, many feet below. Pines and scrub shadow the place, but when the moon rises, it lights the wide, pebbly path which the proprietors of the inn have made around the basin. There are big rocks far out in the water, which one gets to by stepping-stones. Richards saw that the woman and the girl were going out there.

He hurried, then. Some premonition sent him flying down the long slope of the path. There was nothing to urge him. Sure-footedly, the two went on; but he ran faster, his eyes fixed fearfully on them. He was just at the margin of the basin when that younger, slighter one threw out her hands, slipped and fell.

He was across the stepping-stones—he was springing off the rock, after her.

The cold dash of the water cleared his brain of the mist which had lain on it. Why, the water was not really high. Where was the girl?

"There—there—there!" the English teacher was crying to him. "See—out there!"

Far above, the falls thundered down, and out there, where the black head floated, there was a dangerous boiling and swirling. He had on his coat and his shoes, and he was but an indifferent swimmer, at best, but he got to her, groping blindly for her; but she had sunk again. He was afraid to think how long it had been since he started for her.

There was no going back by the way he had come; the other shore was nearer. Queer blue and red zigzag lances of light were flashing up before his eyes, before he pulled himself out, with the girl in his arms.

Of course, he must have been out of his mind, or he would not have done what he did, then. He kissed those full, cold, sweet lips, with a sense of joy so deep that it went with him clear into the dreamless place to which he sank.

He came out of that with the taste of brandy in his mouth, and the light of a lantern shining in his eyes. Bewildered, he looked at the ring of faces around him. Country people, he thought, at first, and then he knew. Only one race in the world has such eyes—blue, they may be, if they have roamed the British Isles for untold generations; or brown, if they have known the Balkan roads; or black, if they have looked on the sands of Arabia since unknown time; but the same in the peculiar cut of lash and brow. They were dressed mainly in overalls and blue shirts, he observed; all but one gorgeous figure of a full-blown woman, in a red skirt and a flashing bolero, and with two great braids falling over enormous gold hoops in her

ears. She knelt on the ground near him and held the head of the girl he had pulled out of the water.

"What—what——" he said, after the incoherent fashion of people who are coming out of unconsciousness, and tried to sit up.

"It's all right, Mr. Richards," a familiar voice assured him. He turned his head and saw that the teacher of English was kneeling beside him. "She's all right, too; only her ankle is strained. She had on high-heeled slippers, you see, and she's not really used to them. When she fell in, she was in so much pain for a minute, that she got out in deep water before she knew what was happening, and but for you I'm afraid——"

"I should never, never have been able to get out," said the girl, raising herself, and holding out her hand. Richards leaned over and took it, and then struggled to his feet, feeling uncomfortable. A thin, gracious, old man was patting him on the back, and a little old lady with spectacles was pressing his arm. There were a lot of half-grown boys looking shyly at him—and there was that story-book figure holding the girl. His fluent tongue was dumb.

"These are John Lane's folks, Mr. Richards," the teacher said sympathetically, "and the young lady whom you rescued is Marda. Her friend, there, is the Princess Dora Parse, and this is Aunt Alice Lee, and this, John Lane, himself. They're Romanys, and their wagons are down the canal a bit."

"How do you do," Richards murmured futilely, and although he was shivering, his face began to burn. She was a gypsy, then—— How much of a fool had he made of himself before her, anyway? His information had been wholly gleaned from books—authoritative books, supposed to be—but he now felt a sudden doubt of them. "I—you'll excuse me—I think I'd better get back to my room——"

"You'll come along with us, son," said Auntie Lee. "Alma Dye has everything ready. I sent back word by Pyramus."

"Oh, did you!" Richards exclaimed, yielding to the two old people, still dazed. Pyramus! What kind of a midsummer night's dream was this?

The girl, Marda, was carried past him, in the arms of two young fellows. They held her between them easily, securely, moving with that confident swiftness which is characteristic of those who live in the open. Richards looked after them, and frowned a little. He knew that it was ridiculous to be jealous, but he knew that he was, just the same. He could still remember how that young body had felt, pressed tight against his own; he carried a burning impress on his lips of two other lips whose coldness could not chill him. Her long braids had come down. They hung over her back, glistening in the rays of the lanterns, borne by those behind her. He had an itching in his hands, for the feel of those long, silky strands. Careful, careful! His mind, wholly turned from its spree, warned him. Why, this is a gypsy girl, you know! Nice girl—must be very unusual, but of course—— With all that, it was queer that he could not keep his hungry eyes off her long braids.

The wagons were just off the tow-path, in a pretty, tree-encircled glade. There was a big fire roaring in the middle of it.

"We'll have your clothes dried soon," old John said to Richards. "Just go up into the *chals' wardo*, and change into what they give you."

"The boys' wagon," the teacher interpreted, in a low voice, seeing his confusion, "where you can change your clothes."

They led him toward one of the red, high-wheeled wagons, with the four little steps at the rear, and a friendly

gleam shining from its curtained windows; and he awoke to the fact that here, at last, was a real, a stupendous adventure. And so different! When had he ever imagined anything like this place, high enough for him to stand up in, lined with bunks; each with its bright blanket neatly folded, and its spotless white pillow; and its long bench running down the middle; and its lockers beneath the lower bunks; and its shelf of books and fishing tackle, beneath the driver's seat? And here was that Pyramus who had seemed a misty figure out of a Shakespeare revel, turning out to be a shy, freckled boy, with blondish hair. The only queer thing about him was his heavy, black eyebrows. Richards had already noted that peculiarity. While some of the tribe were as dark as Marda, some were almost fair, but even these retained the dusky coloring in the eyebrow. Pyramus gave him towels to rub himself down with, and a shirt, and overalls; and then he went out. He both dreaded and longed to speak to Marda; but the longing was uppermost. He did not want to remember that he had kissed her, or that he had had those strange emotions while he fought for her life and his own, but he did want to explain to her; though how he was going to put such a complicated thing into words was a mystery.

She was sitting close to the fire on a camp chair. She had changed her dress. Behind her, Aunt Alice Lee stood carefully shaking out the great mass of her hair, to dry it. Impossible to talk before the sharp eyes of that old lady who reminded him of his own New England aunt, for all of the strange duskiness of her skin. Marda saw him stop and hesitate, and she gathered up her hair over her arm, and came toward him, holding out her hand.

"I am not going to say 'thank you,'" she said, looking up at him, "for those

would be poor words. But you know, and I know, that I owe my life to you."

"Oh, don't mention it," Richards answered, and was instantly aware of the stupidity of it.

But the girl did not laugh. He was to learn that she seldom did, although her smile was frequent.

"Are you quite warm?" she asked. "You had better come to the fire."

Involuntarily, he looked at the old woman, still standing there, and the girl followed his glance.

"Aunt Lee will leave us alone, if you wish it," she said. "My hair is drying."

He was astonished and flattered and afraid. He thought again of how it had felt when she lay in his arms, in the water.

The girl walked forward, and said something. He did not know the words.

"You can speak Romany, can't you?" he asked, as he came up to the fire, and stood beside her chair.

"Naturally. I heard *Romany jib* just as soon as I did English."

"I—you know, you speak English very well."

"I—why, what should I speak?"

"Your—your *jib*?"

"But that is not exactly a language, you know."

He blushed clear up into his hair.

"No, I don't know," he said in a miserable voice. "Say, look here, will you let me explain about—about to-night? Upon my soul, I had no intention of—well—oh, I just got to going, and you seemed interested, and I wanted to make you keep on looking at me." It was not at all what he had intended to say, and he knew that it explained nothing. "I mean——" He started again.

The girl shook her finger at him.

"Hush!" she said earnestly, "you are not within four walls now, and it is not necessary to say every word so explicitly. I understand. I understood

when you first began. You were just telling good stories. It is always amusing to listen to stories, and you tell them so well!"

"But I really told them as if I—you know, I said——" Again he floundered miserably.

"But that is nothing!" In her eagerness, Marda stood up, close to him, and the night wind slyly blew against his hand those long, silky strands which he had so longed to touch. "It is not necessary to speak the truth, the literal truth," she went on. "Romanys do not think so, unless you hurt some one by telling a lie; or unless it is to your brother, or your beloved, or your friend. And tales—what are those? You should hear John Lane telling of the fights in Epsom, in England, between us and the police. He always says he was there; but that is two hundred years ago! You *gorgios* value so much the little, little word which means nothing, and you care not at all that you hurt one you love, by some falsehood. Romanys do not lie under oath. But you *gorgios* often do. I know—when I lived among you I often knew that was true."

"You have a pretty poor opinion of *gorgios*, haven't you?" he asked.

He was relieved that his yarn spinning was not taken seriously, and his emotions, thus released, ran off into a sort of sullen resentment at this blunt criticism of "gorgios."

Her rare smile flashed on him.

"But you are a *kosko gorgio*!"

"How do you know that I am good? I should think, after the way that you heard me going on——"

She put that aside with a swift motion of her little hand.

"Romanys know by something more than words," she said. "So we lighted the fire for your comfort, and soon we will do other things. It is only for real cause that we light fires on a moonlight night, you know."

"But I don't know," Richards again made answer, his sense of shame returning to him. "All that stuff I talked about was nonsense, I guess. Tell me why you don't have a fire when it's moonlight."

"It would offend Those."

"Who?"

"Those." She struggled with some odd reluctance. "We mean by that, what you call the 'gods.'"

Again, the breath of alien mystery, of romance, swept him.

"What is your religion?" he half whispered, wondering whether she would tell him of strange rites, of—

"Why, I'm a Methodist."

"What!"

"Yes—all John Lane's tribe are."

He shook his head helplessly.

"I will explain all about the *Kaulliratte* to you some day," the girl said. She had been the star pupil of the teacher of English, and had lived four years in Dover, while she was going to school there, and she understood perfectly the amazement of this *gorgio Rye*. "You are *kosko*. I told you that I knew it! And my people know it! We feel with the heart, we Romanys, and that is always truer than when you think with the head. I will tell you more, some time, if you want to hear, *prala*."

"I shall always want to hear anything you will tell me," he said earnestly. "Will you tell me now, what is that name you give me?"

"I call you 'brother,' because you are to be one. Go and stand beside John Lane and *miri* Dye. They are waiting for you."

"What is it, what is it?" Richards implored her. It was true that the old man, the head of the tribe, and a frail, little wisp of a woman were standing at a little distance, and that many more people than the young man had seen, as yet, were hurrying from the wagons.

There was an air as of something about to happen.

But the girl just gave him a little push, and hobbled over to the one they had called the "princess." Richards saw that her ankle had been bandaged. "Her poor little foot!" he thought, even as he wonderingly went forward, in answer to the old man's beckoning hand.

The two old people placed themselves beside him, and a boy, Pyramus, came up and held out his hand. Richards mechanically pressed, and stared, as he felt a small, thin knife pressed against his palm. A little girl came next, shyly, as all children do when performing something that they have been taught; and when he stooped to touch her hand, she pressed a fold of her tiny skirt into it. One by one, with a little pause between them, they came, Marda with her princess friend supporting her; and John Thomas Richards, who had never known anything but those far adventures which may be followed before an open fire, by means of a

book, fairly felt the hair on his head rise with excitement.

Last of all, the old man and the old woman came; and then they all broke into a sort of low murmur, which Richards knew was a sign of pleasure.

"What—what—what——" he implored the old man.

"It is the skirt and knife bond, my son," said old John Lahe, "and it is the only way that a *gorgio* may become our brother. Now, your joys are our joys, and your sorrows are our sorrows! In summer or in winter, in four walls or beneath the sky, in Romany *tan* or *wardo*, in life and in death—we own you ours!"

Bewildered, Richards looked about him at the friendly, smiling, fire-lit faces, and a mist came over his eyes. As for Marda, she turned her face, so that no one might see the expression which lay on it, for although her lips had been cold, she had not been unconscious when they had been pressed in the tender kiss, free from evil, which had spoken to her heart.

UNDER GREEN TREES

TEMPEST from the valiant sky,

Music of the shaken reed,

Can a thousand kisses buy

You and April, mine indeed? —

Fling the dice and let them lie!

Not a joy from all your mind

Will you grant me, beggar's dole?

And you never would be kind

Though I kissed your very soul!

Race the coursers up the wind!

Queen of desperate alarms,

Though Destruction be the priest

That shall bring me to your arms,

He may wed our bones, at least!

Life was vintage, borage-crowned,

Pour the cup upon the ground!

STEPHEN VINCENT BENET.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Theodora:

The Circus Girl Who Ruled the World.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

THE amphitheater at Constantinople was thronged with people in holiday garb, languidly watching the progress of the circus. Many of them were too bored to make a pretense of looking at the arena, but sat, half turned away, idly chatting with one another, or whispering choice bits of scandal.

All at once was heard the cry: "Theodora! Here comes Theodora!"

The crowd awoke to instant attention and enthusiasm, leaning forward to gain the best possible view. Into the cleared space capered an absurd little figure, with a stool over its head. At sight of it, the mighty crowd burst into delighted laughter. Around the arena galloped the little six-year-old "clownette," puffing out her cheeks, grinning impishly, and rolling her eyes this way and that with youthful deviltry, as she galloped.

The more ridiculous her caperings, the more happily the crowd roared, for she was their idol. Yet she could neither dance, nor sing, nor play on any sort of musical instrument, as did the other performers of the circus. The secret of her whole success lay in the

fact that she was an embryo superwoman.

She had the sense to know that a crowd likes to laugh; so she gave them every chance to do so at her expense. Her tremendous personality did the rest. For this the public loved her, and waited through long tedious acts of painful boredom, for the sake of enjoying Theodora afterward; just as people, to-day, sit meekly through a stupid moving picture, anticipating, in the next reel, Charlie Chaplin.

Custard pies had not been invented in the early years of the sixth century. But if they had been, Theodora would, doubtless, have thrown them about.

Her father, Acacius, was a humble bear feeder at the Constantinople circus.

Bear-feeding was not especially lucrative as a profession. So, despite the tears and indignation of his wife, Acacius sent his three small daughters, Comito, Theodora, and Anastasia—the eldest was only seven—into the ring, in the garb of suppliants.

The habitués of the circus were divided into the two political factions of the day, the Greens and the Blues. The Greens, for some reason, received the three babies with contempt. The Blues were sorry for them, and showed it. Theodora never forgot this—as she proved in later years, when she became empress.

As a trio, the baby actresses were not a success; but Theodora was so ridiculously funny and adorable that she was soon singled out from the others, and allowed to become a solo performer.

As a tiny star, she held her audiences from start to finish. Before long, she showed undoubted promise of beauty. Her buffoonery and pantomime became more enthralling than ever. The poor child had no morals, of course. But that was through no fault of her own. What baby, plumped down in the middle of a crowd of vagabonds, at the age of six, could hope for better luck?

She grew up, realizing that her only chance lay in her attractions, and in the use she made of them. There was no one to look out for her, so she lived by her wits. From the ludicrous little waif there gradually emerged a superwoman of surpassing beauty, whose lovers were legion.

Theodora was quite impartial. From among the hordes who sought her favor, the hard-headed little apache invariably picked the richest. She seems to have been quite conscienceless, listening to the vows of one suitor, only to break his heart for the sake of a richer or a stronger man.

Her strange, illusive beauty was the cause of numberless quarrels. "Her features were delicate and regular," says Gibbons. "Her complexion, though somewhat pale, was tinged with a natural color. Every sensation was instantly expressed by the vivacity of her eyes. Her easy motions displayed the graces of a small but elegant figure. Painting and poetry were incapable of delineating the matchless excellence of her form. The beauty of Theodora was the subject of flattering praise, the source of exquisite delight."

That she did not believe in hiding this "excellence of form," is evidenced by her favorite costume. It consisted of a narrow girdle—nothing more.

"The only reason she wore the girdle," said Procopius, "was because the law forbade stark nudity in the circus."

She was at once the delight and contempt of the populace. People were scornful, yet they could not keep away from her.

In the midst of her madcap reign as "queen of vice," she wearied of it all, and ran away with Hecebolus of Tyre. The Tyrian was wild over Theodora, and carried her off for safe-keeping to Pentapolis in Northern Africa, where he was governor.

For a while, things ran smoothly. Hecebolus lavished gorgeous presents on Theodora, and did his best to keep her from missing the gayeties of Constantinople. But it was not long before she sickened of him and his presents. The two lovers began to quarrel. Hecebolus found his ladylove not only shamefully extravagant, but very prone to flirtations. He had his hands more than full. The quarrels came to a climax, and Theodora fled to Alexandria, where she soon found herself in extreme poverty.

But she was not long in making friends. She gathered around her an ever-increasing host of admirers, and wended her carefree way gayly from one city of Asia Minor to another.

She dallied along like this. And, when her fortunes were most abjectly uncertain, she had a dream. In it she was told that she was destined to become the wife of a mighty king. She believed in this dream, with all her heart and soul. And from that moment she began to comfort herself—outwardly at least—as befitted one born to extreme greatness.

She stopped frivolling, and turned her steps toward Constantinople. Once arrived there, she assumed the mantle of respectability, like the skillful actress she was, and started to earn her living honestly, by the very humble and laudable industry of spinning wool.

She went to live, all alone, in a demure little house, which long afterward she changed into a magnificent temple. She began to wear clothes, instead of jewels. And she discarded all her giddy associates.

In Constantinople, Theodora, turned saint, was bound to attract even more attention than Theodora as "queen of vice." Everybody began talking about the great transformation. Before long, her name was on all lips. Rumors of the changed Theodora came to the ears of Justinian, who was, even then, virtual ruler of the Byzantine empire, though his uncle Justin was still on the throne. Justinian was the son of a poor Slavic family, but his uncle, Justin, had taken a fancy to him and given him every chance to rise. When Justin ascended the throne in 518, Justinian was established at his elbow.

At the reports of Theodora, Justinian's curiosity was piqued. He sought out the fair spinner. As usual, she was at her daily task. With downcast eyes she guided the rise and fall of the wool, deftly displaying her shapely hands and feet as she worked, apparently quite unconscious that an emperor-to-be stood before her.

Justinian was enchanted. He formed the habit of slipping away to Theodora's noncommittal little cottage. Her beauty, enhanced by her Quakerlike garb, fascinated him more than that of any woman he had ever known. Her modest demeanor only increased the value of her rare and wonderful glances. Justinian became her slave. He loaded her with presents which she invariably accepted, after first protesting against them. Soon, he was pouring the treasures of the East into her lap.

Theodora found that her strongest bait was to keep Justinian guessing. Whenever she seemed just within his grasp, she managed to slip through his fingers, and leave him empty-handed.

She also gained great ascendancy over his mind; an ascendancy which she never lost, and on which he depended greatly, in later life. He loved her deeply and truly; and he resolved to run no chance of losing her. He begged her to marry him.

But the laws of Rome expressly forbade marriage between a man of senatorial rank and any woman "of the theatrical profession or of servile origin." Also, Justinian's family objected most strenuously to the union. The chief opposition came from Justinian's aunt, the empress, Euphemia, herself a barbarian of rustic manners but unbridled chastity. Justinian's mother, Vigilantia, though she acknowledged Theodora's wit and beauty, was afraid of her impudence and levity. She feared for the happiness of her son. Justinian refused to listen. Their croakings made him want Theodora more than ever.

With the women of his family arrayed against her, Theodora had to bide her time. She improved it by making herself solid with Justinian's imperial uncle. So, when Euphemia, the chief objector, suddenly died, the emperor yielded to Theodora's entreaties, and repealed the objectionable law. Thereupon, Theodora was raised to patrician estate, and the marriage took place.

Not long afterward, the crafty Theodora persuaded Justin to admit bride and groom to a share in the sovereignty of the empire. Four months after this, Justin was so obliging as to die, and Justinian and Theodora became sole rulers of the Roman world—at that time the whole civilized earth.

The circus girl's dream of royalty had come true—and she was then only twenty-four years old, with the bulk of life before her. A superwoman certainly manages to twist the strands of fate around her fingers, does she not?

Once firmly established on the throne,

Theodora speedily acquired unbounded influence over her husband. He consulted her in everything, and allowed her to stick her fingers into the governmental pie as often and as deeply as she liked, stirring up the mixture to suit her own sweet whims.

She had a legal right to interfere, for she was not only the emperor's wife, but "empress regnant," which gave her full power with Justinian, in all decisions. The oath of allegiance was imposed on the governors of the provinces in Theodora's name, as well as in his.

The Eastern world fell prostrate before the genius of the former circus girl. "She was adored as a queen by grave magistrates, orthodox bishops, victorious generals, and captive monarchs," writes Gibbon.

Strange to say, some flicker of shame, some insistent memory of her muddy and sodden past, made her turn from the homage of the crowd, whenever it was possible. She liked to run away from the limelight of the capitol, and spend months at a time in the palaces and gardens on the coast of the Propontis and the Bosphorus.

She spent hours daily in taking care of her glorious beauty, wallowing in luxurious baths, taking long morning and evening naps, and keeping herself on a rigid diet. During these sacred rites, she used to allow the most illustrious personages of the state to kick their heels for hours, crowded into a dark, smothery antechamber. When, at last, after tedious delay, they were admitted to kiss the feet of Theodora, they were treated entirely according to the whim of the moment. Sometimes she assumed the silent arrogance of a goddess; at other times she lapsed into the absurd buffoonery of her circus days.

Always she was haunted by the fear of her husband's death. It was a wholly selfish fear. She knew that he

was all that stood between herself and the gutter. She did her best to pile up an immense fortune against any such contingency. Her fear of disaster led her to surround herself with spies, who faithfully reported to her any word, look, or whisper against herself or the emperor.

Her cruelty to suspected traitors knew no bounds. They were thrown into prisons, where help could not reach them. Here, in Theodora's presence, they were put on the rack, scourged, or otherwise tortured, while she paid not the slightest heed to their cries or pleadings. Often, the victims died. Some, less lucky, lost their limbs, their reason, their fortunes; and were then turned loose as living monuments to her vengeance. None of her servants dared disobey her orders, however cruel.

"If you fail in the execution of my commands," she used to say, "I swear by Him who liveth forever, that your skin shall be flayed from your body!"

In spite of her cruelty toward persons she feared, Theodora had heart enough to remember those who had once been kind to her. In the political war then in progress between the Green and Blue factions, she did not forget how the Blues had pitied the little baby clown with the stool on her head and had thrown coins, and flowers, and kindly words into the arena.

She cast all her powerful influence upon the side of the Blues. In 532, there was a fierce contest between the two parties, during which Constantinople was almost laid in ashes. After this, the rival parties combined against the government for a brief time, and proclaimed Hypatius emperor.

The ruin of Justinian and Theodora seemed imminent. Then, among the tumult of the people and the terrors of the court, Theodora's courage rose triumphant. She proved herself a true empress as well as a superwoman. She

gathered, her tattered hosts together, put new life into their general, Belisarius, and, by her clever wit, wrung victory from what threatened to be ignominious defeat. When Justinian, deeming all lost, had urged her to fly with him, she had answered proudly:

"Go, if you will! My place is here. Empire is the true winding sheet for majesty."

Justinian, cowed and panic-stricken, had halted at sound of this melodramatic speech. It was a grand-stand utterance, of course; but it had its effect. If the circus girl remembered the duties of empire, her patrician husband dared not forget them.

Her resolute spirit acted like an electric shock to the discouraged Belisarius. Between them, they turned the tide. The rout became a triumph. The Blues returned to Theodora's standard; the Greens were crushed with dreadful slaughter; Hypatius and his accomplices were killed; and quiet again reigned.

After this, no one could doubt Theodora's genius as a sovereign. She made her great honors a sacred trust; and from the moment she married Justinian, she "placed the realm ever before pleasure."

There was another queer quirk to her character. She had prayed earnestly for a son; and when this wish remained unfulfilled, she regarded it as punishment for her past life. She collected five hundred women, members of "the oldest profession," from the streets of Constantinople, and ensconced them in a palace on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. This she turned into a safe, and holy retreat. Here they were all to end their days in peace and happiness, liberally maintained by Theodora. Most of them did so; but now and then, one of the poor creatures, desperate in her loneliness, plunged headlong into the sea—which shows that

one cannot please all the people all the time.

Theodora became an inveterate matchmaker. She was always marrying people to other people, who did not wish to marry them at all! Probably this was another form of uneasy conscience.

That she remained absolutely true to Justinian, there is some doubt—a doubt he himself is said to have shared. Infidelity, like the movies, or unbecoming hats, gets to be a habit. But Theodora was always far too clever to give her dull and doting husband any ground for proof. She fooled not only Justinian, but the public. Her enemies would certainly have pulled down her shaky reputation if they had had the slightest opening. They were always right at hand, on the lookout for that chance. Only once did scandal gain an atom of credence. And that was never proved. Procopius, who was always malignant in his denunciation of her, does not seem really to believe in this affair. I cite it for what it is worth.

Areobindus, a young artist of great beauty, fell desperately in love with the empress. She was disposed to dally with his love. There was a brief intrigue. Then, one day, Theodora found that the lover had been faithless. She promptly had him tortured to death, and decided to forget him.

Justinian's love for her never swerved. The mingled charm and genius that had raised her from slum to scepter, enabled her to hold him.

Theodora's health began to break down. She had always been delicate, and the tense life she led steadily sapped her vitality. Her doctors ordered her to visit the Pythian warm baths. "On this journey the empress was followed by the prætorian prefect, the great treasurer, numerous counts and patricians, and a splendid train of four thousand attendants," says Gibbon. "The highways were repaired at

her approach. A palace was erected for her reception; and as she passed through Bithynia, she distributed liberal alms to the churches, the monasteries, and the hospitals, that they might implore Heaven for the restoration of her health."

But all the prayers, and processions, and journeyings were of no avail. She died of cancer, in the twenty-second year of her reign.

So passed Theodora. As to her beauty, her intellectual gifts, and her imperious will, there can be no doubt. She was a most amazing woman, born to shine in any sphere. About her lack of morals, also, there can be no question. But as to her fiendish cruelty, we can, at least, allow ourselves to hesitate. She had many enemies. There were jealous, defeated, bitter politicians

who scorched her with their flaming pens whenever they could. Possibly such tortures as she really inflicted were necessary to scare foes away from the throne. In those days politics and barbaric severity always went hand in hand.

Some one has said: "The start doesn't matter. It's the finish line that counts."

Theodora's "finish line" was the virtual rulership of the known world. Her start had been the gutter. She made the amazing journey in twenty-four meteoric years. She held her hard-won laurels many years longer. Loveliness apart, her genius alone would have crowned her as an ideal super-woman.

Peace to her lurid little soul—if she had a soul!

Next Month: Mrs. Blennerhassett.



GOSSIP

I'VE need of a thorn stick now when I take the road,
And good folk, down by Ballinrobe, look me by,
And cluck their tongues and say 't is a grievous thing—
Make me the sign, and turn me a timid eye.

What if the dark-haired winds came over the hill
And plucked the leaves to a little silver tune;
And what if I heard, like God's own harps in Heaven,
Fiddles and fifes and sheep bells under the moon!

What if I heard, and rose from my bed one night,
And danced with shadows over the happy sod;
Nor vexed the dew pools, white as a dead man's hand!
Sure, an' I danced my dance to the glory of God!

And old men over their pipes would nod their heads,
And women over a drop o' tea would croon—
Seeing me limp my limp down Ballinrobe way—
"T is Dermot, jigged his toes off under the moon!"

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS.



The Bobbed Head

By Reita Lambert Ranck

ELLIE CARTER stood behind the handkerchief counter, her small, dusty hands busy among the debris wrought by industrious bargain hunters. It was close upon five-thirty in order before the girls could hope to leave, even though the closing bell rang promptly. Ellie's slender feet, in their inappropriate high-heeled pumps, were swollen into pain-filled puffs, but she worked with mechanical haste.

"Oh! Are these the embroidered ones advertised for to-day?"

A pair of smoothly gloved hands protruded themselves between the neat rows of handkerchiefs and Ellie's eyes.

"Yes'm," she said wearily.

"How sweet!" gushed the late customer, and the careful little stacks flew hither and thither under her fingers.

But Ellie Carter was quite suddenly blind to the ravages being made upon her orderly counter. She was gazing at the girl, oblivious, for the moment, of everything save that fascinating vision bending over her counter. She was a slender, expensive-looking girl, with a gay, oval face. She wore a suit of old blue, intricately tailored, and pressed so that it fell in innumerable graceful pleats. A tiny, close-fitting, blue hat topped the costume, but Ellie's eyes were fastened on the hair under the hat.

It was bobbed!

It clung about the small head in soft waves, quite free of pins or combs, and the even line of it about her ears gave the most enthralling touch of piquancy. Ellie thought she had never seen anything quite so fascinating, and dragged out box after box of her wares, displaying them with infinite pains, in an endeavor to keep this captivating creature before her, this symbol of all that was free, unrestricted.

The clang of the closing gong and the departure of her late customer occurred simultaneously, and she stood with her pencil poised above her sales book, watching the graceful, blue figure make its way toward the door.

"Well, I'm sure, Ellie Carter, I wouldn't let any dame muss up my stock after I'd got it all stacked fer th' night!" commented Laura Higgins, folding her apron. "Why didn't you tell her you didn't have what she wanted, or anything to get rid o' her?"

"Laura, did you see her hair?"

"Sure! Bobbed, wasn't it? What about it?"

Ellie began a rapid tidying up of her stock.

"Ain't you even got your book added up yet? Well, I guess I can't wait fer you. G'night!"

"Good night, Laura!" said Ellie vaguely.

It was six when she emerged from the employees' entrance. From her meager supper at the corner restaurant she hurried to her room. When she had lit the feeble flame in her sputtering gas jet, she dropped into the only rocker the place afforded, and unpinned her hat. Resting there luxuriously, she thought of the girl with the bobbed head. Unconsciously, she lifted her hands to her own hair and began pulling out the pins. A moment later, her pulses throbbing, she arose and stood in front of the golden oak dresser with its Cluny lace scarf and its shell pincushion. Dimly, because of the anæmic state of the gas jet, her own face, in its frame of flowing hair, smiled back at her. Yes, she decided, her hair was of the same color and quality as the bobbed girl, only thicker, perhaps, and more wavy. Suddenly, a glorious madness seized her, and she jerked open the rickety bureau drawer, groping in it excitedly. Her heart was pounding, her eyes dancing, and her cheeks daubed with a single spot of crimson. A moment later, carefully holding a pair of scissors open-jawed just below her left ear, she took a long breath.

Between eight-thirty and nine the next morning, the employees of Ritter & Saulsby's Department Store straggled in through that obscure entrance especially reserved for them. For the most part, they arrived on heavy and lagging feet, but Ellie Carter brought to the weary procession, that morning, the joyous step of a doe. Her inadequate high heels flew joy-winged down the corridor and into the locker room, where shrill exclamations greeted her.

"Well, Ellie Carter! Girls, look what Ellie Carter has done!"

Laura Higgins waved an astonished powder puff toward Ellie, and a shrill chorus of "oh's" and "what-d-y-know's" blended.

"But it's awful cute," said stout Maud Murphy enviously.

"Becomin', too, but how did you dare?" blurted Sally Roberts.

Both Maud and Sally were safely ensconced on the far side of thirty; they could afford to be honest. Others, however, correspondingly youthful and slim, tossed their heads and hated Ellie vigorously; hated her for the purity of her oval face, the glow in her blue eyes, but mostly for the daring that had inspired the bobbed head. Ellie, donning work apron and black waist, was inexplicably gay.

"It makes you feel—oh, I can't describe it. It makes you feel different, somehow—so free!"

She hummed about her work that morning, giving an occasional self-conscious pat to the bushy circle of her new coiffure. Somehow, it seemed as if with the tumbling of her heavy hair about her feet went some intangible weight from her young spirit. She felt unaccountably buoyant, imbued with a new enthusiasm. The short, clinging waves, unhampered of pins, gave her a lithesome sense of irresponsibility, and she found an answering smile in the faces of her customers, too. They twinkled back at her with a kindly tolerance.

"That cunning, cropped head!" remarked one woman in passing, and then Jennie Macaulay, the messenger, sauntered up.

"Th' boss wants t' see yuh, right off."

"The—what did you say?"

"Mr. Freeman wants yuh in his office," repeated the indifferent Jennie.

"What you been doin', Ellie?" inquired Laura anxiously.

Ellie shrugged her shoulders in an effort to appear nonchalant, but cold fear clutched at her heart as she hurried toward the sanctum sanctorum which sheltered that almighty director of human destinies, the boss.

Mr. Freeman was invaluable to the firm of Ritter & Saulsby's. He was a gentleman of aristocratic appearance, with plenty of easy poise and a shrewd, a very shrewd eye. He also possessed the double value of knowing exactly how to "handle" both salespeople and customers.

Ellie, very youthful, with her conspicuous, shining head and absurd heels, presented a scared little face at his office door.

"Did you want to see me, Mr. Freeman?"

He whirled about in his swivel chair, and lifted his glasses from a thin, intellectual nose.

"Yes, Miss—er—Carter," he said. "I must confess myself surprised, disappointed in you. I had hoped to make a very good saleswoman, perhaps a buyer, of you."

The fright in her face mingled with her bewilderment.

"Maybe lately my sales have fallen off," she murmured, "but I'll try—"

"Come now," interrupted the astute Mr. Freeman. "I am sure you are aware of my reason for sending for you. Although I am sorry to have to do it, I fear we shall have to let you go."

"Go!" Her face was white now; her heart had dropped like a stone to somewhere below her waistline. Mr. Freeman had whirled about, and was writing something on a slip of paper.

"Oh," she repeated childishly, "I haven't done anything!"

Irritably, he swung about and raised an accusing forefinger.

"You call *that* nothing!"

Then, cold comprehension bathed her and she raised a hand to her head. She had quite forgotten her madness of the night before.

"It is a great pity you did that," he was saying. "That sort of thing may be all right for a—a dancer or some show girl whose business it is to at-

tract attention to herself. But for a salesgirl in Ritter & Saulsby's—"

He finished with a gesture which was more poignant than further words.

"Our salespeople are not here to attract illegitimate attention, but to sell goods."

She went dazedly out of the side entrance into the street, her half-week's wages clasped tightly in her hand, walked wearily back to her room and dropped into the rocker. From an over-large family, Ellie had come to the city some two years before and, with a letter from the owner of the town's "general store" had secured the position in Ritter & Saulsby's, where she had worked with careful diligence ever since. Now, the fact that she was not to return, that she was discharged, overwhelmed her. Finally, she sprang fearfully to her feet, and caught sight of herself in the mirror. Her frightened face relaxed; the sight of that shorn head steadied her; and quite suddenly she felt buoyant again.

The action of the sharp-jawed scissors had lifted her out of the commonplace, the humdrum rut. She had freed herself from the confining hairpins and the intangible bonds of conventionality at the same moment. This should not cast her down!

Exhilarated, she dressed carefully, and after a last, affectionate pat on her shining head, hurried down the stairs. A few moments later, she walked grandly into McVary's palatial department store and purchased a new pair of kid gloves, black, with heavy bands of white stitching, like those the bobbed girl had worn. They cost her half her little horde of money, but she recklessly added a sheer collar-and-cuff set to her purchases, and in the seclusion of the ladies' room donned the expensive finery. After that, she made her way to the manager's office, and was referred to "our Mr. Dugan who has charge of that particular branch."

"Our Mr. Dugan" turned out to be rather fierce; he wrinkled up his eyes suspiciously as she made her application. As she talked, she found that she was unaccountably self-possessed. No doubt the new gloves and the collar-and-cuff set had something to do with it.

"Your last place?"

"There's only one. I never worked anywhere but at Ritter & Saulsby's. Handkerchiefs and aisle tables."

"Reason for leaving?"

The words popped out like hard little marbles. His pencil poised expectantly above the blank.

"Oh," faltered Ellie, "I didn't leave, they—I——"

"Discharged?"

"Y-yes," she said weakly.

"What for?"

"Why," began Ellie, and then she laughed nervously. "My hair you see—they——"

He raised those suspicious eyes of his from the application paper, and for the first time noticed her hair. For a full half minute he surveyed her, then rose.

"I have your name and address," he said coldly, "if there should be a vacancy."

He did not look at her again, but left her standing there. And Ellie knew that the vacancy would never occur.

She went from McVary's to Crieger & Son's, and from there to Anderson & Cory's, and from Anderson & Cory's to Stambough's.

Stambough's was an enormous place, with a very different clientele from Ritter & Saulsby's, but Ellie realized, by now, that she could not be too particular. The man to whom she applied was fat and bald, with a very jovial air. He received her smilingly, giving her an occasional appraising glance during the usual department-store catechism.

"My, what a nice way to fix your

hair!" he said finally. "Take off your hat! Well, well now, maybe in the millinery we could put you to trying on. How'd you like that, eh?"

"Oh!" cried Ellie, "I should love it! And I could try on the misses' hats, too, with my hair like this."

He adjusted the top of his fountain pen and arose.

"Sure you could!" he agreed. "Of course, we'd have to create such a position for you. I guess we could manage it, eh?"

He extended a pudgy hand and patted her hair.

"Course we wouldn't work you too hard. Nothin' like that! A pretty girl like you, with her hair all fixed so nice, eh!"

She stepped back as he came toward her, rubbing his hands together, his eyes wolfish and eager, behind their thick glasses, a suggestive smirk upon his lips. Suddenly, the significance of his attitude swept over her, and she turned and rushed through the door.

Two days later, Ellie stood before the dingy mirror in her little room. She was very pale, and there were black shadows around her blue eyes. Her experiences of the first day had been repeated on the two days following. Undoubtedly she had done a mad thing when she had innocently clipped that shining head of hers. Obviously, now that it was done, different things were expected of her—the sort of things that would correspond with her hair. What had Mr. Freeman said—"that this sort of thing might be all right for a dancer or some show girl?"

The reflection in the mirror stared back at her, wan and pathetic. But without doubt, that glossy, boyish head gave an unusual, bizarre touch to her appearance. In spite of the droop to her mouth and the faint lines of hunger about her eyes, Ellie Carter looked gay, a little pert, as if one might expect from her the unusual. Forced to this

conclusion, a new determination came into her eyes. Very well, then, she would give them what they expected. She would have the courage of her impulsive act. Supperless she crawled into bed, but with a hard glint in her eyes, a grim bitterness in her young heart.

The following morning, rested but famished, she donned again all her brave little extravagances, and started forth. At a near-by dairy lunch she ordered lavishly of bacon and eggs. Success depended greatly on calm self-possession, and she knew that hunger is conducive to neither beauty nor assurance. When she emerged, the haggard lines about her mouth and eyes had disappeared, but her small leather purse contained exactly thirty-five cents. Her plans for the day she had drawn with the same care with which an architect makes his blue prints, and her first step was in the direction of the Palm Garden.

For many months Ellie Carter had longed to visit that most elaborate of musical-production theaters. Of course, the Ellie Carter of Ritter & Saulsby's had known of but one entrance into this enviable fairyland, the one which led past a shockingly expensive box office. But *this* Ellie Carter, she of the bobbed head, had come, through necessity, to know that there was another way, more obscure, perhaps, but more attainable. So it was to this entrance that she directed her firm steps. She had almost encircled the large theater before she found what she was looking for. It was a sign suspended above a dingy door and it read: "Stage Entrance." When she had timidly entered, she found herself in a dampish alley that terminated in a huge, dim cavern smelling strongly of cheap cosmetics, leaking gas, and dust.

There is probably no place in the world quite so desolate as an empty stage at nine-thirty in the morning.

Ellie stood uncertainly in the half-lighted place. Tall, imitation trees loomed above her; great stretches of chipped landscape were before her; and tawdry grandeur was everywhere. One gas light flickered sickly at the back of the stage, making the whole appear the weirdest of make-believe worlds. Suddenly, she had a fierce desire to run, her throat was full of hard little lumps, but a man, the only reality in this world of unrealities, appeared. He was grimy, in blue overalls and a battered derby, but his voice was unexpectedly kind.

"Well, miss, rehearsal ain't 'til ten-thirty. Did yuh *sleep* here?"

"Oh, no," she gasped. "I don't—don't belong. I—I'm just looking for a position."

"Chorus is full," he said shortly. "New show's all supplied."

He had come toward her, and stood now studying her critically, his keen eyes seeing much that she would have liked to conceal.

"Anyhow," he said, "all our girls have to be experienced."

"Oh!" she said, and turned dejectedly. "Oh, dear!"

"Say," he said, and she came to a despairing halt. "I tell yuh what! Rice & Blakslee's puttin' on a new show. They been havin' trouble with their girls, so maybe you could land some-*thin'*. Swell show! Class, too!"

"Oh, thank you!" said Ellie, hand outstretched, face beaming. "Thank you so much!"

He shook the small hand, studying her face as he did so.

"Now you take a tip from me, girlie," he said bluntly. "Don't go there like you came here, all shrinkin' and scared-like, lettin' everybody know, right off the bat, that you're green! Go right in brightlike. Tell 'em you heard they needed girls, and you happened to want a job. If they say anything about experience, *sure* you're experienced! Act

to home and kind of bold. The Blakslee Theater corner Broadway and——"

"I know," cried Ellie. "You're so kind! Thank you so much!" and she was gone, aflame with new enthusiasm.

At the Blakslee Theater, a few straggling members were assembled for rehearsal, but their presence seemed to be the only notable difference between this "back-stage" land and the one she had just left. There were more lights and the scenery appeared newer. Otherwise there were the same odors, the same grimy grandeur that had pervaded the Palm Garden. Outside, Ellie was calm and self-possessed; inside, her heart was pounding painfully as she approached a coatless man whose hands were full of typewritten manuscript and who seemed, by his shirt-sleeved familiarity, to be some sort of authority. He was seated at a small table near the footlights. Behind him was the vast, empty auditorium. As she came toward him, he raised his head and scowled.

She swallowed hard, and paused just before him. She tried to forget Ritter & Saulsby's and the comfortable days behind the handkerchief counter, and to remember only the advice of the dingy man in the battered derby.

"I hear," she said brightly, "that you're short of girls for the new show. I happen to be free right now, and I'm looking for an engagement."

He looked at her sharply. The small, oval face was free of any suspicion of make-up. That meant that she was sensible. He could not recall having seen her before, but accounted for that by assuming that she had been in a road company. She was pretty, with a delicacy and refinement not too common in the show business. These observations he made in less time than it took for Ellie to still the beating of her heart.

"Walk across the stage," he ordered shortly.

For a second, the demand threatened her composure; then she turned and walked with the courage of desperation to the extreme left of the stage and back again.

"Humph!" he commented, then, "Take off your hat!"

Ellie dragged it off, and the small, boyish head reflected gay glints of bronze from the light above her.

"Think you can be on time to rehearsal? One thing I don't stand is dillydallying, and you'll have to catch up with the others. We've been working for two weeks, and we open on the twentieth. Just run upstairs to Mr. Blakslee's office and sign up, then come right back here and start in."

At six-thirty that night, Ellie let herself wearily into the dingy but respectable house in which she had lived since her advent in New York. She was drooping with fatigue, a state that remained chronic during the weeks of strenuous rehearsal. With the assistance of the impressive pink contract which stated that Miss Ellie Carter was to receive from Messrs. Rice & Blakslee the sum of twenty-five dollars per week for her services, beginning October twenty-seventh, she managed to establish credit with her landlady. But of ready money she had none, and this necessitated the additional exertion of walking to and from the theater and, toward the last days of rehearsal, owing to a curtailment of the lunch hour, there were many days when she danced with real hunger clutching at her and hanging a leaden weight about her slender ankles. Those were the days when Ellie remembered, with a sharp pang of regret, her uneventful and comfortable days behind the handkerchief counter; days when her domestic little soul rebelled hotly, and found no comfort in the glamour of her new surroundings.

When "The Gay Cuckoo" opened at

the Blakslee Theater on the twentieth, blasé first-nighters noted that, among the new chorus girls, front row, third from the end on the left, was a lithe and absurdly youthful little person with an impudent, bobbed head. Wise eyes noted, with satisfaction, her freshness and grace, and made age-old prophecies concerning her future.

When the piece settled down for a long run, Ellie made her "bit" stand out as one of the gems of the performance. First-row devotees watched and reveled in the youthful grace of this fresh, oval-faced girl with the fascinating bronze head and alluring, wide blue eyes. Many were the vain attempts made by callow youths, and others not so callow, to pluck this tender shoot budding on the gnarled theatrical tree, but what, to her admirers, seemed a piquant abandon was, in reality, only the habitual thoroughness with which Ellie Carter undertook any task. When she was not on at the theater, she spent much of her time in her room. And from the boisterous gayety of other members of the chorus, from the glare of too-brilliant restaurants, and the doubtful delights of lobster suppers she kept aloof. To her new work she gave the same diligent attention that she had devoted to "handkerchiefs" at Ritter & Saulsby's.

Then one day, nearly a year after her ignominious snub at the hands of that firm, she decided, suddenly, that she had a mission in life.

It was on a crisp, autumn morning and Ellie, with Enid Rayson, one of the few girls with whom Ellie had become intimate, were hurrying through the shopping district. They had almost collided with two men, and were mumbling apologies, when Enid broke out into a gay chatter of recognition.

"Why, Harry Kemble, what do you mean by trying to walk right over us! Meet Miss Carter!"

Ellie bowed; there was a flurry of

gay introductions to Harry Kemble's companion.

"Freeman, let me present Miss Rayson and Miss Carter. Coming our way? Then, we'll go yours."

And the next thing Ellie knew was that she was walking confusedly beside the once awesome Mr. Freeman, of Ritter & Saulsby's, and that he was looking down, with polite admiration, into her face, with no sign of recognition on his own. Nor was that strange. The former subdued and shabby little salesgirl could hardly be associated with this glorious, well-tailored creature. How could he know that this confident, well-poised young woman had once experienced hunger and humiliation at his hands. No, Mr. Freeman did not remember, but Ellie did!

As they strolled up the gayly thronged avenue, this man's presence brought back to her, in a great rush, those hard, disillusioning weeks. His heartless dismissal of her she had never forgiven. For all he cared, she might now be a little heap of decaying clothes at the bottom of the river.

As these thoughts were flying through her mind, she was carrying on an animated conversation with him, putting forth all her alluring little wiles, giving him shy glances from her blue eyes, and Freeman, completely charmed by this beguiling young person, was doing his utmost to impress her, too. As the four halted before one of the shops, Ellie gayly interrupted the others.

"Oh, you're talking about Rawley's," she gushed. "Is it such a fascinating place to dine?"

"Perfect! I've been trying to get Miss Rayson to say you would make up a foursome for dinner there to-morrow, but she tells me you don't go out," said Kemble.

"Why, Enid!" protested Ellie, "why are you trying to cheat me out of a perfectly good party?"

"But Ellie—" began the amazed Enid.

"Of course, you'll come, won't you, Miss Carter?" It was Freeman who spoke, his eager eyes upon Ellie's face.

"I'd love it!" said Ellie, and shyly met his eyes.

When the men had left them, Enid launched a storm of amazed questions, as the two entered the shop.

"Why, Ellie Carter! You! After being such a perfect little prude to suddenly say you would go to Rawley's with us! And the way you looked at that Mr. Dignified!"

"He is dignified!" mused Ellie thoughtfully. "Looks as if he could be pretty cruel, too, don't you think? Did you notice his eyes, how cold?"

"Not when he looked at you, my dear. But he isn't the sort, I'll admit, who usually falls for a chorus girl."

Ellie called her friend quickly by the arm.

"Do you think, Enid," she said earnestly, "that I could make him fall for me?"

Enid laughed.

"You funny little thing, to keep inside your shell all this time, and then pop out into a regular flirt! Well, it looks as if you had made a good beginning."

On the following day, Ellie, arrayed in the one evening dress she possessed, paused before the mirror with a little sigh of satisfaction. Her slender throat, rising out of the soft, blue folds, her hair cuddling close upon her small head, she viewed with a peculiar relish. Ellie had read tales of revenge, though, it must be admitted, with no particular enjoyment. Now, however, while she awaited her knight's coming, she recalled them with studious precision and a determined glint in her eyes. When Mrs. Evans appeared with his card, she threw her cape about her shoulders, and a moment later appeared before him,

a lovely vision, flushed and exuberant.

"How—how charming you look!" he said. "Like something quite unworldly and ethereal!"

"But then, I might take wing and fly off," she laughed, "and I wouldn't—from my first party."

He helped her into the waiting taxi, where she snuggled down in the corner, her face, in its frame of fur, all soft contours and delicate colors.

"To tell you the truth," he said confidentially, "this is my first party, too—this sort of a party! Usually, I am a staid and prosaic individual."

"Oh, no!" contradicted Ellie, "not staid and prosaic—not you!"

He smiled down at her a bit wistfully.

"Yes, me! Bachelors get to be either very gay dogs or very dull ones, and I'm one of the latter. Perhaps, though, you may see some hope for me."

He leaned toward her, his face disconcertingly serious.

"You see, I'm thirty-five—do you believe there's still hope?"

"Thirty-five is a beautiful age," said Ellie softly, "a 'specially good age to learn lots of things."

The dinner at Rawley's was a perfect success. The gayety was really supplied by Enid and her companion, while Ellie wrapped herself in a garment of shy reserve, with now and then a wide-eyed smile for her escort, or a drooping of her long lashes when his eyes were upon her.

It was their first and last "four-some." After that night, there were only two in Ellie's party, and they did not go again to Rawley's, but frequented small, dim places, candle-lit and quiet. There were teas and luncheons and a few after-theater suppers. There were just enough declined invitations to add zest to the race that the dignified Mr. Freeman had entered. There were boxes of flowers and intri-

cately fashioned bandeaux of forget-me-hots which Ellie would wear, like a crown, on her sleek little head. And at last, on a night in December, she had her reward. He asked her to marry him!

In spite of herself, the thing came with a distinct shock. They were having lobster newburg and coffee in a tiny, exclusive restaurant, and there was a cozy fire crackling in the brick fireplace at the end of the room. They were seated on high-backed settles, with a narrow table between them when, quite suddenly, he leaned across it and said, with his characteristic precision:

"Ellie, my dear, will you be my wife?"

His thin, fine face was very pale, and he seemed to stop breathing while he waited for her answer. Ellie, struck wordless, gazed back at him, nearly as pale, quite as breathless. It had happened, the thing she had so carefully planned all these weeks. Now was her opportunity to hurt him as he had hurt her, to scoff at his love, and flounce out of his life, leaving him with a bitterness from which a man of his nature would not easily recover.

But somehow she was finding her part a difficult one to play. She realized, to her dismay, that she wanted to cry, and when she tried to speak there were annoying lumps in her throat.

"Oh," she began, "you—I——"

"Surely," he said solemnly, "you knew I was going to ask you?"

"Yes—no," she said. "That is, I knew you liked me—I wanted you to like me——"

He reached swiftly for her hand, but she jerked it fiercely away.

"You must listen! I—I wanted to avenge myself. You don't remember, of course, but I do! You made me what I am to-day."

"What you are!" he said, perplexed.

"Yes," she blurted childishly, "a

chorus girl. And before that, I almost starved. For three days, I lived on crackers and cheap sodas and—and for all you cared I—I might have been something much worse!"

"Why, Miss Carter—why, my dear, whatever are you talking about!" There was a comical mixture of alarm and despair on his face.

"My hair," replied Ellie fiercely. "I never wanted to be a chorus girl! I wanted to be a buyer—of handkerchiefs. I was doing so well and I was happy and then you—you——"

He put an anxious hand over hers and held it firmly.

"Tell me," he demanded sternly, "what you mean!"

"You discharged me," said Ellie, restraining her tears with an effort. "You sent me away from Ritter & Saulsby's because I cut off my hair!"

Gradually he remembered. She watched recollection dawn in his face.

"Yes," he said finally, "I *do* remember!" And then a flush of remorse swept over him. His face, in its realization, was pathetic.

"Oh, my dear," he said, "you! you, the girl I love! But don't you see it was my duty—the orders of those who make the rules? I should have to do it again to-morrow."

Ellie arose and drew her cape about her.

"I want to go home," she said thinly.

In the taxicab she huddled miserably in her corner. She could see that he was lashing himself with regret and futile reproaches.

"And so you planned this," he said at last. "You planned it to punish me! Poor little thing—and you were hungry!"

His concern was not an easy thing to witness. Ellie squirmed uneasily, and then began to sob. At that, he reached over and took her desperately in his arms.

"I could kill myself," he said bitterly. "Damn Ritter & Saulsby's! I—I beg your pardon but, oh, my dear, let me do something to make up! You can't be a buyer of handkerchiefs, and you *aren't* a success as a vampire, but you *can* be my wife. Oh, my dear, say you will—say it!"

Oddly enough she made no effort to free herself. Instead, she hung more

limply in his arms, sobbing softly while he soothed her with trembling, gentle hands.

"But I—I thought," she said finally, from the depths of his arms, "I thought you didn't like b-bobbed heads."

At that, he laughed loudly and healthfully, gathering her closer to him.

"I don't—on my salesladies," he said happily, "but I'd love it—on my wife!"



A PRIESTESS OF APOLLO

THEY come to me for prayers and prophecies,
 Yet under all this weight of vesture burns
 The primal heart of woman, and within
 Apollo's temple, lo, a mortal yearns
 For those beloved common destinies
 Of intimate and human deities!

The columns of the sacred temple stand
 A marble epic to the gods of Greece;
 The sky above, deep azure, veined with pearl,
 The sea below whose sighings never cease;
 Immortal gods, your beauty stifles me!
 Ye who have made me woman, make me free!

Men come to me for prayers and prophecies,
 And in that mystic moment, big with fears,
 Priestess, I turn for them the blotted page,
 Bright red with blood or silver white with tears,
 But all the night in cradling dreams I rest
 And hold dream children to my woman breast!

ELIZABETH NEWPORT HEPBURN.



The Heart Decides

By Kate L. McLaurin

Author of "The Lieutenant of Fate," etc.

SHELBYVILLE lay bathed in the sunlight and dew of an early June morning when a young man on a black horse cantered down the wide, locust-lined street and drew up before an old white house set far back in a flower-massed yard.

He settled in an easy position on the saddle, and looked up the broken brick walk to the door of the house. No sound of life greeted him save the twittering of birds in the cedar trees that guarded the sagging gate, the occasional cackle of a hen, and the triumphant crow of a cock in a far-away barnyard, and soon a crooning negro song as Mammy Lou, bowed with age and rheumatism, came out on the steps.

"Mornin', Marse Mason," she said at the sight of him. "Miss Jean am all in a flutter dis mornin'." She turned painfully to the door and called, "Miss Jean, honey, here's a gent'man to see you."

A clear voice answered, and soon a girl's face appeared at the screen door. Seeing Mason, she flung open the door and ran down the walk.

"Good morning," she said, leaning over the gate, her radiant young face smiling up at him. "Isn't it a wonderful morning for Paula's homecoming? Oh, Mason, think of her coming—at last!"

There was a little twitch of the lips and a sudden moisture in the eyes that added a new and appealing beauty to the upturned face.

"Yes, it's great," he agreed.

"Why, she hasn't seen the old house since she was nine, and we'll be— Oh, well, we'll have a birthday this summer, but I'm not going to tell you how old we are. Paula might not like it."

They both laughed, and Mason said: "Paula is probably one of those thoroughgoing young women who wouldn't care a whoop who knew her age. You are the twin that wants to keep it quiet."

"A fine chance I'd have to keep it from you!"

"Yes, I played with you right under that old tree when you were three, and Mammy Lou says I kissed you and said I was going to marry you when I grew up. You see," he added bitterly, "when I was six, I didn't know that you'd have anything to say about it."

"Now, Mason——" she began.

"Jean," he said desperately, "everybody is saying you are engaged to Austin Moore. Is it true?"

"Why, Mason Blaine! You're my oldest friend. Don't you suppose I'd tell you first?"

"No," he laughed, "you wouldn't tell

me. You're straight about everything else, but I don't believe you ever told a man the truth in your life."

"Why, Mason!"

"Oh, I don't blame you. Men like to be strung along, I guess. But, Jean, I don't want to see you marry a Northern man and go away from us."

"Any Southern man would be all right?"

"No, just one. Jean, I've loved you always. I can't give you up!"

"Mason, you're spoiling everything by being so serious. I care for you of course—"

"Like a brother!"

"No—not exactly," she said archly. "I like to have you make love to me—practice has made you do it so fluently! But please don't— Oh, Blackie," she cried, putting her face against the smooth black neck of the horse, who was rubbing his nose against the gate post, "just listen to your master!"

For answer, Blackie lifted his head and neighed gently.

"That's right," Jean went on. "Tell him what a foolish boy he is, and tell him that Jean thinks he's very good the way he has kept his promise about one thing."

"About drinking, you mean," Mason cut in. "That's nothing. I'd give up anything for you."

At that moment a voice from the other side of the street called out, "Good morning, people," and Jean, peering across Blackie's neck, called out, "Good morning."

Mason saw the new light in her eyes. He picked up the reins, and with a gentle nudge wheeled Blackie into the road as Austin Moore crossed to them.

"Isn't it time you were on your way to the station?" he asked Jean. "I called up, and for once 'the Flyer' is on time." "The Flyer" was Austin's name for the local that covered twenty-

five miles in three hours, and was generally an hour late at that.

"I'm not going to the station," Jean explained. "Paula wanted me to wait for her at home, and of course Aunt Sally couldn't go. Come in for a little minute and see all the flowers that have been sent to welcome Paula. Of course yours are the nicest."

With a smile, he followed her up the walk into the old hall, with its great open fireplace filled with a huge vase that held plummy asparagus ferns. The long mahogany davenport, the rosewood chairs, the two oil portraits in heavy gilt frames, and the wide stairway whose first landing crossed the entire width of the hall at the rear—it all had a never-ending appeal to Austin Moore, born and reared in a narrow brownstone house in New York.

"This is a jolly hall," he said for the twentieth time. "But out with your story. Your eyes are full of excitement."

"Well, it's gotten out that we are engaged, and everybody has been by to ask about it." She dropped to the davenport beside him.

"And wide-eyed, innocent Jean denied it vehemently!" he said.

"Yes—it isn't time for them to know. I want you and Paula to meet first."

"The wonderful sister has to approve of me?"

"Oh, she will, but I want her to know you. I've written her about you, but very mysteriously—never told her your name or that we cared seriously for each other."

"Little Mrs. Guy Fawkes, you! I ought to be jealous of this sister." Then he took her hand and added more seriously, "It was a pretty tough thing to separate you girls."

"There wasn't anything else to do, I reckon. We were so awfully poor after father's death. Aunt Ann offered to take one of us, and of course it had

to be Paula, for even at nine she was better suited to Boston than I. Aunt Sally took boarders here in the old home. I've never told you that before, have I?" she asked breathlessly.

"No, but I think that was brave of her."

"It was, but it made her the invalid she is now. Then we sold our old swamp land, and now Paula is coming home, and there is—you—and altogether it is a very beautiful world!"

"You dearest girl!"

"Do you really think I am?" she asked eagerly.

"In all the world."

"I'm glad," she said with a contented sigh. "Then you won't think me silly if I ask you a question?"

"Jean, Jean," he protested laughingly, "you aren't going to ask me if I ever loved before!"

"Then you have."

"Never really—never been engaged before."

"But how many girls have you loved?" she demanded.

"One," he confessed.

"Oh, I wish you'd said two or six! Never mind. You wouldn't understand why. Who was she?" she teased.

"I don't know—on my honor, I don't. We met by accident—in a real accident, I mean. We were on a train that was held up by a wreck ahead. We were the only two in the parlor car, and when we were practically thrown into each other's arms, why, naturally we talked. We were delayed several hours, and we did quite a lot of talking."

"What about?" Jean insisted.

"Oh, about the wreck and college and athletics. She was an outdoor fiend. She didn't tell me her name, and I called her 'the Sapphire Lady.'"

"Why?"

"She wore a ring with a sapphire in it that almost matched her eyes." He was provokingly romantic in his tone.

"And you saw her a lot after that?"

"No. Once, at the Army and Navy game, I sat near her. Then she came to one of our baseball games. It was my time at the bat when I first spied her—and I knocked a home run." He turned to Jean, who was looking at him with large, solemn eyes. He saw the hurt in them. "See what a pretty story I've cooked up for you! Since I've known you, I haven't given another girl a thought." There was a moment when no word was said, and later, looking into her eyes, which were close to his, he went on, "Now I'm going to scold you."

"Me?" she asked innocently.

"Is it right for an engaged girl to flirt every day with a man on a black horse? You were so engrossed you didn't see me until I called out."

Jean laughed.

"I wasn't flirting with Mason. I don't suppose, since I was sixteen, he's missed a day riding by the house, and sometimes he stops to talk. We're just friends," she said archly.

"Oh," Austin answered. "And the way he looks at you with his leading-man eyes!"

"Well, I haven't flirted with him since— Oh, you don't know what a completely reformed person I am! This very morning, I counseled with Mary Louise how she might bring Clay Harper to the point. Do you think, in my old days, I would have left a young lieutenant to the tender mercies of another girl? But now I'm engaged, reformed, and giving away all my secrets, and as for Mason—"

At that moment her ear caught the sound of hoofbeats coming to a standstill in the heavy dust before the front gate, and a voice crying, "Whoa, dar! Whoa, dar!"

"There she is!" Jean cried and, forgetful of Austin, she flung open the door and dashed down the walk, as a

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tall, fair-haired girl in a blue linen suit stepped from the town hack.

Halfway up the walk, the two sisters met, and there were cries of "Paula!" and "Jean!" and "My dear one!" answered with "My little sister!" while old Uncle Eustis, the hack driver, stood by with Paula's bag in one hand and his hat in the other, his kindly old face grinning in sympathy.

They moved into the hall, and Jean looked about for Austin, but he had disappeared into the drawing-room, intending to make his escape through a window. The two sisters stood until the departure of Uncle Eustis; then Jean drew back and looked at Paula.

"Oh, Paula how pretty you are! I'm so happy—happy!"

"You darling Jeanie, you're just as I've always imagined—so beautiful—so lovely!" Tears filled her eyes and, to hide them, she glanced about. "And the old house—it hasn't changed a bit. It's been years, and yet it seems like yesterday. Nothing has changed; only you've grown up. As I rode up from the station, the trees, the flowers, the sunshine, even the dust that we used to kick up with our bare feet, were just the same."

"I'm so glad—so glad!" Jean said tremulously. "And look at father and mother." She pointed to the pictures that hung over the davenport. "It seems as if they knew we were together—at last. But I was almost forgetting Aunt Sally. She's so frail now, she can't leave her chair. I'll run on up, and in a moment you come." She ran up the stairway, but paused on the landing to wave a kiss to her sister.

Paula stood still, looking about with eager eyes. Then, moved by a desire to see old and dear things, she opened the drawing-room door and discovered Austin Moore, who had found the wire screens obstacles to escape. They looked at each other a moment.

"The Sapphire Lady!"

"What are you doing here, Austin Moore?"

"Are you Paula?"

She nodded.

"And you are—— Why didn't Jean tell me?"

"She wanted to surprise you," he floundered. "Let's not tell her. We mustn't," he said desperately. Then, aware that she was unconscious of the situation he had caused by his confession, he went on, "Jean has it all planned. We mustn't spoil it."

Then Jean called, and they reentered the hall.

"Oh, you two have met!" she said from the stair landing.

"Yes, the wire screen kept me prisoner, and your sister walked in on me," Austin answered. "But I'm off now. Glad to have met you, Miss Jeffreys."

Paula nodded to him as he departed, and then walked slowly up the stairs to join her sister.

"When you wrote me about him, why didn't you tell me his name?" she asked with a puzzled smile.

"Did you know him before?"

"I've seen him play football," Paula admitted.

"I wish I had!" Jean answered, in her excitement drawing off Paula's gloves. "Oh, what a love of a ring! But it's a sapphire," she said with a little laugh.

"Don't you like them?"

"I did until to-day, but Austin loved a girl once that wore one, and I think maybe I'm jealous," she confessed with a wistful gayety.

"Do you really love him, Jean?"

"Yes—and I want you to love him, too. We're engaged, Paula, darling. Aren't you glad?"

For answer, Paula put her arms about her sister, and their lips met again.

"Of course I'm glad," she said.

The old town of Shelbyville was at its fairest in June, for then roses bloomed in old gardens and climbed in white and red and yellow glory over trellises and porches and softened the outlines of the ancient houses—solid brick houses of colonial pattern, white houses with green shutters and wide verandas.

Hospitable doors were opened to display spacious rooms and antebellum furniture—heavy mahogany pieces, rosewood, black walnut, and an occasional horsehair sofa and out-of-tune square piano. Oil paintings of grave men and gentle-eyed women looked down to remind the present generation that, in spite of the lapse of time and the changes that the war and its resultant poverty had brought, in the veins of the youth of Shelbyville flowed the proudest blood of old Europe.

Over the little town brooded the spirit of the "old South," and there was a grace, a sweetness, a "fixedness" in the social life, a savor of the days of chivalry, a touch of the lady and her knight, unknown in other, more enterprising sections of the country.

It was such a world that presented itself to Austin Moore, sent down from New York to look after some timber interests of his father's. At first it had seemed unreal, like a story or a play, and he had found himself waiting for the third act. But life flowed on calmly, uneventfully, and if there were tragic third acts, no whisper of them passed the lips of the joyous young people of Shelbyville.

The return to her birthplace was a similar experience to Paula, and during the first strange days when she was striving to adjust herself to her surroundings, to accustom her ears to tales of love and conquest—during these days, there was but one who understood. Jean smoothed everything with love and a great desire for her sister's

happiness, but it was Austin Moore who really helped. He played tennis with her in the cool of the morning, took her for tramps over the hills, and rowed her on the sleepy river that washed the eastern border of Shelbyville.

So June passed with its roses and July came. Through the long, hot days the town lay somnolent under the steady rays of the sun, and the inhabitants ventured out only in the early morning and late afternoon. All gayeties were reserved for the evening.

Just back of the Jeffreys' garden rose a hill that had once been dotted with cabins, long since destroyed by fire. Here Austin had been able to find a place sufficiently level for a tennis court, and here, during the summer afternoons, he and Paula played, while Jean dozed under a mosquito net in a darkened room.

The last game was over, and Paula threw herself on a bench under the great oak tree that stood just beyond the court. Austin lighted a cigarette and seated himself on the grass at her feet. They had spoken of the game and the heat, and now had fallen one of the silences that were growing frequent between them.

"You still wear your sapphire ring," he said at last. "At the time, I was afraid it was an engagement ring. It would amuse you, all the things I thought about you."

"Don't you think, since we can't tell Jean, we ought not to talk about it?" she answered.

"I guess so. It's hard to know what is right always, isn't it?" he asked, raising troubled eyes to hers. "Sometimes I think we ought to tell her."

"It's too late," Paula put in hastily. "She wouldn't understand. Besides, we didn't know each other, really," she added with a smile.

The sun dropped lower, and long shadows fell across the court and crept

down the hillside. There came the sound of a high, clear voice; then a chorus of other voices through the trees that lined the garden fence just below the hill.

"There's Jean now," Austin said, as he walked to the edge of the elevation and looked down on the climbers. "And I see Mason Blaine, of course, and Bob and Page and Mary Louise and her young soldier." He called them out as they came in view. "They're loaded down with baskets. Hurrah! We don't have to go home for supper!" He hurried down to help Jean with her basket.

"We thought we'd surprise you and Paula, and you two poor dears must be starving," Jean said. "We must spread the cloth right under the tree, so Mason will be able to lean against it!"

When the white cloth was spread and piled high with Mammy Lou's best efforts, they gathered about it. There was talk and laughter and the singing of sentimental songs, while the shadows lengthened and a light breeze sprang up, grateful to them after the heat of the day. When the food had vanished, they wheeled into a sitting line to watch the swallows circle about the sky and drop into convenient chimney tops. A young moon rose over the river. Mason picked up his guitar and strummed on it. Mary Louise and her young lieutenant strolled away, and Bob and Page wandered off, leaving the sisters with Mason and Austin.

"I wish I were Joshua," Mason said lazily.

"To make the sun stand still or to lead us into the promised land?" Paula asked.

"To make the moon stand still," he answered.

They all laughed at this, and Jean begged him to sing his Mexican song. For answer, he fixed his eyes on her and sang, to the guitar's accompani-

ment, a haunting air that had come across the border and been passed from singer to singer without ever reaching paper. It was plaintive with love and longing, and it spoke the pain that was in three hearts that heard it. Only Jean was happy, and a light shadow rested even over her clear spirit.

The others strolled back, attracted by the singing. On Page's face was the smile that came when she and Bob were at peace, and something of the magic of the twilight had touched the young lieutenant, for he gazed at Mary Louise with his secret big in his eyes.

Jean announced that she was to give a dance to celebrate her and Paula's birthday, so no one must make an engagement for that evening. Soon after, Bob and Page gathered their belongings and started home, followed by Mary Louise and her attendant. Paula walked with them to the edge of the court, and after their departure, she called Mason to identify some far part of the town.

Left to themselves, Austin moved nearer Jean, and she looked into his eyes with a smile that hurt him.

"I'm going to announce our engagement at the dance," she whispered.

"Jean," he said impulsively, "if I were just half worthy——"

"Why, you old dear, you're the nicest person in the world!"

"I wonder how long you'll think so," he said, with a mournfulness that made her laugh.

"Forever!" she declared. "We'll let the others walk on, Austin. I've such a lot of things to tell you—not having seen you since—two o'clock!"

"Jean, I—I was going to take Paula to see the falls by moonlight. You know you asked me to. We were to start from here."

"But didn't we promise to go to Mrs. Palmer's this evening?"

"I'm sorry I forgot. We'll go, of course. I'll tell Paula."

"No," Jean said slowly, "I'd rather you went with Paula. Mason!" she called, not giving Austin a chance to protest.

At the sound of her voice, Mason turned and came toward her.

"We'd better be starting home. Paula and Austin are going from here to the falls."

Before he could answer, Paula claimed Jean's attention by asking her to come see the new moon reflected in Rattlesnake Bend, and Jean, glad of the interruption, walked over to her sister. The two men were alone. Mason gathered up his guitar and a basket.

"What's the matter with Jean?" he asked in a low voice.

Startled by the sudden question, Austin answered:

"Nothing. Why?"

"Just this," the other went on in the same low voice. "There's no man in her family, and if you hurt her in any way——"

"I don't recognize your right——"

"You'll recognize it all right when the time comes."

Three months ago, this scene would have appealed to Austin as an excerpt from a romantic comedy, but his old matter-of-fact attitude toward the emotions of life had been changed by this new and persistent ache in his heart. He felt trapped, hurt, and above all a "bad sport." His idea of being in love was a pleasant, easy companionship, that, when the right girl came along, would ripen into a pleasant, easy life relationship. But here he was under a Southern moon, defending himself against the attack of a hot-blooded youth who had guessed the thing he had scarcely acknowledged to himself.

"Blaine," he said seriously, "her happiness is as much to me as it is to you."

He reached out his hand boyishly.

He needed some one to take his hand and say, "Of course it is, old chap."

But Mason was concerned with other things than the bolstering up of Austin's weakening loyalty.

"Maybe," he said laconically. "But until I'm sure, I don't care to shake hands."

"You're a bad loser, Blaine," the other answered in the same low voice. Mason had used.

"You——"

"Mason!" Jean called out. She had watched the scene between them without being able to hear a word. "What's wrong?" she asked as she came toward them.

"Nothing," Mason drawled. "Ready to start home?"

"Yes," she said a little breathlessly.

Paula had missed everything, and hers was the gay voice that covered the parting. She warned Jean about the downhill climb, and sent her love to Mason's mother, and promised to be home at a reasonable hour.

During the descent of the hill, a little difficult in the dark, no word was said, but when they reached the garden level, Mason broke the silence.

"Well, your party was a great success, Jean."

"Was it?" she asked, in a voice new to him—a strained voice, very different from her usual lifting speech.

He paused under the old apple tree that grew by the garden gate. The moonlight came through the branches, and there was the sweetness of ripening fruit in the air.

"Anything wrong, little Jean?"

"No." Then, with a hand laid on his arm, "What were you two quarreling about?"

"We weren't. What put such an idea in your head?"

"I saw you. You were, and I don't want you to. You are my oldest, my best friend, Mason, and I don't want you to quarrel with him."

A fierce anger flamed up in him. She was suffering all this for a man who didn't care—a man who— And he, who had loved her all his life, he was nothing. It didn't matter about him.

"With him!" he said with cutting sarcasm.

She looked up at him with pained surprise in her eyes, and his anger gave way to a yearning tenderness. What did his hurt matter when she was troubled?

"Well," he said, with a show of reluctance, "it isn't fair to tell on a chap, but I believe he's jealous of me. He thinks I'm making too much hay while he does his duty by your sister. Jealous of me! Oh, Lord, if he only knew!" he finished with mock seriousness.

"Oh, Mason!" with such a happy laugh that he felt proud of his deceit.

"I said I'd stay with you just as long as you'd let me, and you wanted me to walk home with you, didn't you?"

"Of course, Mason!"

"Of course, Mason," he mocked.

"I did. I always want you, Mason. You're——"

"Comfortable, like an old shoe," he finished.

"More than that. I feel more at home with you than with anybody in the world—more my real self." She was thinking it out.

"But you can't love me?"

They were standing now at the gate that divided the garden from the yard proper. The witchery of the languorous summer night was over them; the fragrance of a sweet shrub that grew by the gate stirred the senses; a golden moon rode high in the heavens; and from the back porch came a crooning song from Mammy Lou, who rocked placidly after the day's work.

"Not as you want me to, Mason. I don't know why. I'm sorry—so sorry, Mason!"

With a sudden impulse, a great desire to atone, she reached up, held his face for a moment between her white hands, kissed him swiftly, lightly on the cheek, turned, and ran up the steps, where Mammy Lou crooned her song that reached back through the generations to dim ancestral life and love and sorrow.

The days flew by with scarcely a variation in the routine of gayety. Austin Moore devoted himself assiduously to Jean. Paula spent the time not claimed by Jean reading to her bedridden aunt. Bob and Page quarreled and made up. Mary Louise confided to Jean that any evening might bring a proposal from the young soldier. But hanging like a thin cloud over the happiness of Jean's days was the absence of Mason.

At daylight, after the night when he had stood with Jean at the garden gate, he had gone down the river on a fishing trip. A week passed, and Jean's first relief gave way to uneasiness. Perhaps the habit he had shaken off for her had claimed him again. She was thinking of him when she met his father coming out of the post office—round, good-natured Judge Blaine, who always told her how pretty she was and never failed to ask, "What chance has that lazy son of mine?" Now he greeted her with a sweeping bow and the oft-repeated compliment, but there was no mention of Mason.

"Where is Mason?" she asked abruptly.

"Went fishing down at Black Lake, but now he's looking over a plantation he thinks he'd like."

"Oh."

"Thinks he wants to be a planter. I'm right sorry, for Mason's got a real turn for the law, if he'd ever settle down. But there's a time in every young man's life when he wants to get away by himself for a while."

"Judge Blaine, I——" She looked up at him with eyes so full of regret that he laid a hand on her shoulder.

"That's all right, little woman. A fellow has to take his licking. But we all do wish it could have been different."

Then Mason came home and rode by the white house, keeping a firm rein on Blackie, who couldn't understand why they weren't to make the usual stop.

The night of the birthday party arrived. The double parlors were thrown into one, the rugs taken up, the floors waxed. In the great hall a rose-wood table supported the punch bowl, and in the dining room the mahogany gleamed from the rubbing of Mammy Lou. The table was decorated and ready for the candles that later would reflect their light in its polished surface. Old silver, saved from the wreck of the family fortune, and vases full of flowers from all the neighboring yards, gave extra festivity to the room.

Paula, tall and fair in her blue gown, and Jean, in white with her mother's corals in her ears and about her throat, received their guests and sent them upstairs. There they paid their respects to Aunt Sally, who sat in her chair, her white hair dressed high and her worn, aristocratic, pain-scarred face smiling as she extended her twisted white hand. All through the evening, her door was left open, and the music and laughter floated up to her. She closed her eyes and dreamed of other days and other gayety that had played itself out in the rooms below.

After the first dance, the young people flocked out of doors. It was a night thick with stars and warm with the languor of midsummer. Benches had been placed about under the trees, from whose branches hung colored lanterns.

Jean fluttered about among her friends, seeing that the cards of the less

popular girls were filled, settling an incipient quarrel between Bob and Page, showing Mary Louise that the shrubbery to the right had been left dark, so that no trembling proposal might be affrighted by the light. And then, when there was a free moment, she stood with Austin on the front porch and smiled in answer to his compliment that she was a wonderful hostess.

"The house is charming, and the grounds like fairyland," he said, "and everybody seems happy."

"I want them to be just as happy as I am—thrillingly happy!" she whispered. "No one will miss us. Come out and we'll hide behind old Stonewall's friendly shadow for a while."

He laughed. He had come to know old Stonewall well—that hardy, man-high shrub with the circular green bench about it. At their first meeting, Jean had told him how, at the age of seven, she had christened it with a watering pot; how her father had stood by while she had named it after his great chieftain; and how, as a child, she had told all her troubles to Stonewall, and her joys, too. They had been seated on the green bench when he had first told her that he loved her.

And now, seated on the same bench, stirred by excitement and the night's beauty and the sense of his nearness, she repeated:

"I'm so happy! Life is so wonderful!"

"You must always be happy, Jean, always!" There was a desperateness in his tone that cut through her gay unconsciousness.

"Is anything wrong, dear?" she asked, laying her hand on his clasped one. "You must tell me. I can stand anything except not to know."

"There's nothing. What could there be? You're telling your friends to-night?"

"Yes. I'm afraid it won't surprise them much."

"Jean, Jean," he said, lifting her hands to his lips, "I want to make you happy!"

Then a voice called her name, and she answered:

"Yes, I'm here, Paula."

"They're asking for you," Paula replied. "I'm doing my best, but I haven't your magic."

"I'm going right in." She ran toward the house, and Paula started after her.

"Paula!" Austin's voice pleaded.

"I can't stop now," and, without turning, she went on in.

He stood looking after her, thrust his hands into his pockets, and started off toward the friendly darkness of the garden.

The hours slipped by, and when Jean had made sure that every guest was on the floor in the maze of a popular waltz, she ran down the walk, leaned over the gate, and peered down the road. A shadow lurked at the far end of the fence.

"Mason!" she called softly.

There was no answer, but the shadow shifted.

"Mason, I want you." And, as the shadow moved near, "You're late."

"I'm not coming in," he answered in a heavy voice. "I was just passing." By this time he was at the gate.

"But it's my birthday, and you promised to come."

"What of that?" he said impatiently. "You're going to marry some one else. You don't care. What difference does it make?"

"But you are still my friend."

"Oh, no, I'm not!"

"Mason, you don't realize what you're saying!"

"Yes, I do. I've been hanging on for years, and you let me hang on until — I've been a convenience—a friend!" he finished bitterly.

"Mason, no matter what you say, we are old friends. You've broken two

promises to me to-night. But we mustn't quarrel. I can't be happy if you——"

"There's nothing else to do, Jean. You don't understand! I don't want your advice, your pity. I want you. If you were only throwing me over for a man who cared—— Oh, I don't know what I'm saying!"

She watched him walk away.

"Mason!" she whispered after him.

Jean looked up at the stars, so bright and clear that they seemed to hang low over the earth. Turning, she saw the open windows through which came the strains of the waltz. The figures of the dancers flashed past, and there was the sound of laughter. Under the trees the lanterns were going out. She watched two fade. The shrubbery to the right was dark and Stonewall was in the deepest shadow. She went toward it, dropped on the far side of the bench, and pressed her hands to her eyes to force back the tears, the great happiness in her heart fighting against the pain of having hurt another. But he would forget when she was gone. When she was gone! At the thought of Austin and the life before her, a great surge of joy came into her heart. What a wife she wanted to make him! He must be just as happy as she was—always. Then his voice fell on her ears.

"Paula," he was saying on the other side of the shrub, "I couldn't dance any more. I had to speak to you."

"What good is it to speak to me?" her calm sister answered in a voice tense with feeling.

"I must. I don't think any man was ever so hard driven as I am. I don't know what to do. Can't you help?"

"How?" Paula implored.

At the first troubled note of his voice, Jean's impulse had been to rush to him, but her sister's answer had stopped her. She gripped the seat, drew herself together, and scarcely breathed.

"It's Jean," he stammered. "I don't care as I should. For weeks I've been fighting with myself, but I can't help it. I know I'm a cad, a coward, but isn't it better to tell her now—not let her find it out——"

"You did love her," Paula said desperately.

"I thought so until you came."

"You mustn't! I can't listen!"

"I've got to speak the truth for just this once. What attracted me, I suppose, was some resemblance to you, and I thought—— But when you came, I knew. Oh, I know I shouldn't, but I can't stop now to be—nice!"

"If you had only waited!" Paula moaned.

"You love me, don't you?"

"No, I don't! I mustn't! She loves you. It would kill her. She must never know."

At that moment Dudley James appeared on the porch and, peering into the darkness, called:

"Jean, Jean—it's our dance!"

A hysterical laugh answered him.

"I'm here!" she called back.

A cry broke from Paula—"Jean!" Two steps brought Jean into sight. "Jean, little sister!"

"Don't call me that! And please—don't you speak!" She put her hands over her ears to shut out the possible sound of Austin's voice. "I want everybody out here, Dudley," she called. "Ask them to come—all of them—now!"

"Jean, you mustn't——"

"You've said that so many times this evening, Paula!"

Out trooped the merry dancers—girls she had known all her life, young men who were her friends. Some of them had loved and wooed her; now they advanced a band of gay strangers.

"Now for the secret!" one cried.

Jean stepped up on the bench and spoke in a clear, lifting voice.

"I promised you all a surprise. I think I won't disappoint you when I

tell you of the engagement of Paula—my sister—to Austin Moore, and I know how much happiness you all wish them." She jumped from the bench and pushed through the crowd, calling, "Now we'll have our dance, Dudley!"

The last dancer was gone. Jean and Paula stood on the top step and smiled them away. The stars had faded; only a pale one showed in the east. One by one, the veils of darkness that covered the world lifted, leaving it gray and shadowy. For a moment the two sisters stood without looking at each other.

"Jean, won't you come in?"

"Soon. I'm not sleepy now."

She passed down the steps and went toward the old bench, where so lately she had made her renunciation. Paula followed her.

"Oh, Jean, forgive me!"

But Jean did not answer. She scarcely heard. The strange thing that was happening deep inside occupied her entirely. She had raced through surprise, anger, defiance, and now it was as if she stood in a great open space alone and in darkness, but the darkness was lifting. Dawn was coming back into her heart, just as the dawn was coming again to the world, and in the new and clear light, the miracle happened.

"Oh, Jean, you're breaking my heart!" Paula said with a sob.

Jean turned to her.

"Oh, my dear, no! No hearts are broken. We just had to be shocked into knowing the truth."

She paused. The sound of a horse's hoofs on the dusty road came to her. Without another thought, she ran to the gate. It was Mason on Blackie—off early to the country. He reined in his horse as he saw her and swung down to her side.

He had heard the news. He laid his strong, gentle hands on her shoulders

and looked into her eyes. They were clear of pain. His hands dropped.

"Jean——"

"Shall I save Sunday evening for you, Mason?" she asked. "I'll tell you about it then. No, then."

He was off. Jean stood by the gate while the gray of the dawn gave way to gold, and peace was on her face as she watched the disappearing figure of Mason, who had loved her since her third birthday.



BALLADE OF HIS LADY'S WARDROBE

GO not to marts of costly show,
To clothe those limbs so round and fair,
But let us to the woodlands go.
I'll find you prettier things to wear,
Hung in a magic wardrobe there;
Garlands to frame your fairy face,
And æry lawns from top to toe,
And for your petticoat queen's lace.

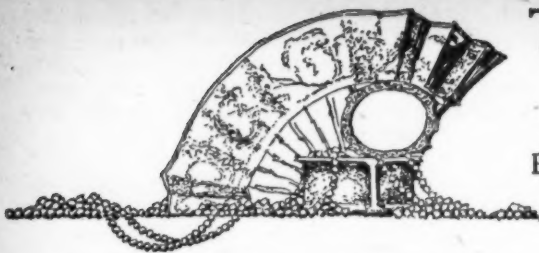
Soft draperies of virgin snow,
If you must hide that bosom rare,
Whiter than Helen's long ago—
'Twere kinder, love, to leave it bare,
Dimmed only by your falling hair—
Yet, if you must deny that grace,
Lo! veils of filmiest gossamer,
And for your petticoat queen's lace.

And flounce and frill and furbelow,
Quaint dimity and diaper,
The fairy artists shape and sew.
Here's silkweed for your stomacher,
And round that sweet diameter
Yclept your waist, this girdle place—
Diana wore the same, I swear—
And for your petticoat queen's lace.

ENVOY.

Princess, and ladies everywhere,
Fashion but ill your form displays;
Nature's your best costumier—
And for your petticoat queen's lace.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



The Winning Loser

By Du Bose Heyward

IT hung in a small show case, chained to the cash register at the end of the bar in "Jerry's Place," and behind the chaste luster of its pearls and the assertive blaze of its diamonds, a card announced:

**This Necklace For Sale.
Price \$100.00.
Guaranteed Genuine.**

Across the room in close commune sat Belle Flavant and Rayburn. The woman was leaning forward in her chair, her eyes resting upon the necklace with an intensity of desire which lighted rivaling fires in their amber-brown depths. To the youth she seemed now more than ever like a deep-red carnation, with her heightened color and that warm, avid light in her eyes.

With an impulsive gesture the woman reached across the table, and covered one of her companion's hands with both of hers. The blood rushed to his temples, and with the frank idolatry of young love, he raised his eyes to her face.

"Lad," she said in vibrant tones, "can't you see that it's not only that I want it because it's pretty? It's because it is *real*. All my life I've had to put up with imitations—friendship, love, and even this little ring and brooch that I wear—paste all along the line."

"Don't say that about friendship, Belle," the man interrupted. "You know that I am—that is, that you have let me——" Stammering, he fell silent.

Her eyes were misty.

"I know, lad. Forgive me! I think it is your friendship, my first genuine possession, that has made me wish for less sham. I want to throw these cheap sparklers away. I believe I could make a better start if I knew there was one little bit of fourteen carat about me to live up to."

The youth leaned toward her. Unconsciously his grasp forced the plump flesh of her forearm between his eager fingers.

"Listen," he breathed, "you're going to have that necklace, and you're going to have it soon." Then clearly, resolutely, all of the boyish diffidence gone, he continued. "And for it I want you, just you, for always."

The woman rose, and Rayburn saw that her eyes were brimming.

"Let's think it over, lad," she said, and before he could move, turned swiftly and left the room.

A block down the street, "Brag" Calloway was stopped by a woman—a woman who had the traces of tears about her eyes, and yet who looked up at him with a seductive smile.

"What d'you want, Belle?" he snapped. "I thought you told me to pack and get. I ain't in no mood to be played with again."

"Brag, do you still feel about me as you did last month?"

The coarse face before her darkened, and the hungry look of appraisal which is the tribute offered by such men to

womanhood, shone in his eyes. "You known damn' well I do, Belle."

"Well, there's a necklace in Jerry's place I've got to have. If you're man enough to get it, I reckon you can bring it on out to the house."

"How am I to know whether you are playing me for an easy or not?" asked the man.

"You'll just have to believe me, Brag." Then, after a short pause, impulsively, "Listen, and you'll understand. I started out in life with all that a woman wants, and I threw it away, never mind why; and all these years I have told myself that the day would come when I could go back. To-day I had my chance. Rayburn asked me to marry him. You needn't smile, and don't interrupt, please. I am not going to do it. I've waited too long, and the kid's too decent. So here I am, and if you still want me, well, I guess you'll do as well as most."

There was still a trace of suspicion in Calloway's eyes as he asked, "but you've got to have the necklace, eh?"

"You couldn't understand why, Brag," she replied helplessly, "but a woman would. There's something about the clean, white pearls that makes me sort of hungry way down inside. You'll let me have them, won't you?"

While she was speaking Calloway's face gradually lost its skepticism, and when she had finished he held out his hand. "It's a go," he said, as he pressed her fingers. Then, suddenly her figure seemed to sag, and turning wearily she started down the street.

When Calloway entered the saloon a few minutes later, he found the place crowded with cow-punchers just down from the mountains, whither they had driven the cattle for the early grass that precedes the pasturage on the plains. Contrary to his custom, he passed the bar and sought a table in a remote corner. He was confronted by an unpleasant necessity. One hun-

dred dollars must be obtained without delay, and he must force his sluggish mentality to devise a means.

Presently, from the babel of voices and clinking glasses at the bar, a chance remark challenged his attention.

"A mountain lion got a Diamond X calf yesterday up in Dead Man Cañon. Chance for some of you shooting-iron toters to clean up."

"What's the purse?"

"Bounty from county, twenty-five; Cattle Association, twenty-five; then Eighty-Six, Diamond X, and Gridiron ranches, a ten-spot each. You can figure it up."

In separate corners of the room, two silent men did.

One, a slight, fair youth with an eager light in his face, arrived at his result; then, after a moment of perplexity, added: "Carbine and burro, twenty dollars. Total, a hundred dollars."

The other, morose, dark, with a face in which immorality and whisky had battled for supremacy and now stood at a draw, snapped shut a ragged purse and added: "Cash, twenty dollars. Total, a hundred dollars."

A moment later, the two men emerged from the saloon, and with the purposeful stride of men bent upon pressing business, departed in opposite directions.

It was noon of the following day before Martin Rayburn discovered traces of the quarry. Since early morning he had traversed first the cactus-bristling flats of the desert, then the rock-strewn lifts of the mesas, where the sun struck torrid, killing blows through the dry, brilliant air. Finally, he had gained the wooded sides of the mountains, where he climbed afoot, allowing his badly winded burro to follow in his wake.

Atop the divide, Rayburn came to a halt. A smart breeze had set the young aspen forest rustling and, as a low bush

swayed toward him, the lift of the leaves revealed a blood-spattered growth at its roots. Five minutes of trailing brought him to the kill.

On the very crest of the ridge lay the remains of a calf. The marauder had scraped a hollow trough, and laid the remainder of the carcass therein, covered with leaves and mold, against future hunger.

"The lion should come again at day-break," reasoned Rayburn, "and I should have his silhouette against the east." So, driving his patient burro before him, he descended the precipitous wall of Dead Man Cañon, and made camp within good range of the ridge.

"Perhaps to-morrow," he breathed, with his face lifted to the infinite blue, and his voice shook with the wonder of it.

An hour after the passing of Rayburn, Calloway came upon the trail. Like his predecessor, he experienced little difficulty in locating the slaughtered calf. For a few minutes he meditated, his hand on the bridle of his flashily accoutered pinto steadying her against her fright at the smell of blood. Then, with sudden determination, he vaulted into the saddle and swung away down the eastern side of the divide.

"She'll be out just before day," he soliloquized, "and I'll catch her against the late moon."

A hundred yards below the crest, in a dense thicket, he made camp. "Perhaps to-morrow," he mused, and his face grew dark with desire.

Night found Rayburn wrapped in his blankets, though with no thought of sleep. He had not dared to make a fire for fear of frightening his quarry, and now, under the infinite, star-sown spaces that canopy the peaks, he lay alert, exhilarated, his rifle ready, his face to the east.

There was no shadow of fear in Rayburn as he lay there in the night.

He knew his woods as some men are born knowing them, and the darkness which pressed close about him imparted comfort like the touch of a friendly hand. Many a night he had waited thus, back among the intimate peaks of the Blue Ridge. In coming West a year ago, to force the hand of fortune, he had wondered whether the vastness of the altitudes would affright him. But they had recognized him as one of the fraternity, and taken him to their heart.

There seemed to him an odd listening quality in the silence, and beneath its influence his mind presented sudden, vivid episodes of his life, spontaneous and shown in true values. It was like a confessional; each detail was stripped of the gaudy fabric with which his boyish imagination had garbed it.

For the first time in his life, he felt that there was a loose stone somewhere at the foundation of his philosophy. Life should be more than merely one long camping trip. He envisaged the disappointed face of his father when he had refused to take the forestry course at college so that he might succeed his father in the great lumber industry founded by his grandfather, electing in its stead to seek a career of his own in the West. "Career;" he knew now that it was merely a thirst for adventure, and would lead nowhere.

Then, there was Eileen. She knew it, too. He saw her again as she had stood that last night when she had refused to go with him, and with mingled love and exasperation in her eyes, had told him that he was just a child playing at make-believe; then had added, with a catch in her voice, "but, Mart, if you ever grow up to be a man, and come back, you'll find me waiting."

But there was Belle now. The thought of her seized his mind like a drug. He reached out his arms in the night.

"Love," he breathed in an ecstasy,

"Love that burns and shakes one like this—that justifies it all! That shows it was fate!"

Across the ridge waited Calloway, intent, as was his unknown rival, upon the summit which rose between them, but nervous and ill at ease in the dark. Take the diversion of human companionship from such a man, throw him upon his own resources, and the ordeal becomes a "third degree" for his undoing.

The night had marched but a third of its allotted journey, and had lifted the Milky Way like a great luminous curtain behind the ridge, while the waning moon was just crossing the zenith, when the watchers first noticed a stir at the far end of the divide. Thus, through accident or fate, the advantage would be with Rayburn.

Presently the bushes parted, and against the background of the stars, the lean, sinuous form of a lion appeared. Very delicately he advanced along the summit of the ridge, now and then testing his footing with a tentative forepaw, and again standing, superb, immobile as a Rodin bronze—the very epitome of life.

Through the silent passage, across the night, two rifles swung after the prize, now covering the vital spot behind the shoulder, and again, in a moment of indecision, advancing to where a single, shining eye showed the head in profile.

As coolly as though at target practice Rayburn lay, resting on his elbows as a soldier shoots, his gun braced, its ivory sight plainly visible in the gloom, and in perfect alignment with his target.

Suddenly, when midway of the ridge, the great cat stopped, its muzzle high. Some vagrant air had flowed up the cañon, leaving an alien scent. Then he turned his face full down the ridge toward the west. Rayburn saw the big eyes flame into view like twin stars.

To his quickened perception they seemed to fade and glow and shade to phosphorescent blue, then burn back to clear yellow again.

Quite coolly he swung his aim from the shoulder, and as fast as hand could pump, slammed three soft-nosed projectiles full between the shining marks. One high, rending scream, so human in its quality of despair that Rayburn choked over an unexpected lump in his throat. Then he saw the twin stars go out slowly, as in a drifting mist, and the vast silence of the night flowed back into its own.

"Funny!" muttered Rayburn, as he settled down to wait for day. "I didn't know there was an echo in Dead Man, and yet I could swear a shot followed mine."

With the first, faint light of day, he scaled the rise which divided him from his kill. The lion's death plunge had hurled him into a low thicket, and as Rayburn approached, he could catch glimpses of the tawny hide through the interstices of the shrubbery. Attaining the slight elevation, he reached out his hand and parted the branches over the carcass, then raised his eyes and looked full into the muzzle of Calloway's carbine. With the force of a blow he received the impression of the short businesslike barrel, backed by a face which loomed against the flat, rose-tinted east, sinister with the determination to slay. Only the face was visible; the body was behind the bushes.

Rayburn had never been covered before, and his first sensation, after the initial shock, was one of hot anger that set the blood pounding and the muscles tense for a spring. Then came the realization that, with the thicket between, his opponent could riddle him before he could clear the barrier.

Suddenly his vision cleared and across his mind there flashed the gleam of an idea, wild, impossible, and yet—

The woodsman may not know women, but it has been given him to know men unerringly. Quite coolly Rayburn leaned forward and noted the loose, full lips and the pale, close-set eyes. "Yellow," he decided. Then he spoke in an even, steady voice.

"This is my kill, and I warn you that I am carrying my carbine on my hip, as I always do, with my finger on the trigger. I have your chest covered through the bushes, and if you fire, or attempt to move, I'll shoot. If I go, you'll go with me."

The shot told. Calloway paled and strained his eyes through the tangle.

"You're bluffing, damn you!" he snarled.

"Then call me!" challenged Rayburn, holding the shifty eyes with his unflinching gaze.

For a moment they stood thus, while Rayburn saw the weak features struggle and the crooked forefinger twitch. Then Rayburn spoke sharply: "Don't be a fool! Life is worth more to you than an eighty-dollar pelt. Put up your gun and go home!"

Calloway made a second effort to fire, but his was a nature which lost headway under strain. Presently, his hand relaxed and his gaze dropped. He muttered an imprecation and brought his gun to his hip, as though preparing for a long wait. Then Rayburn knew that he had won. In the cool shadow of his Stetson, his brow was dewed with sweat. He raised his left hand and swept it across his forehead.

The sun lifted out of the horizon and commenced its climb toward the zenith. An hour passed; then two.

"Say, pard," commenced Calloway in a propitiatory voice, "this looks like a deadlock. We each claim to have shot this hide. Now, how are we going to settle it?"

"The carcass will show my marks. There should be three between the eyes.

I can't see the head from here, but you can satisfy yourself."

Calloway looked down. Then an expression of satisfaction overspread his features.

"Head as clean as yourn," he said. "Must have been mine behind the shoulder." Then, in a friendly tone, "come, let's cut this out! We've got to get somewhere. I'll throw my gun ten feet away, if you'll do the same. Then neither of us could crowd the other through the bushes before he could get back for it. What do you say?"

"I'm with you," agreed Rayburn. "One, two, three, throw!"

Calloway tossed his gun behind him, then shouted:

"Here, you didn't throw!"

"Mine's been there all along," said Rayburn, holding up his hands. "We're even now."

An expression of chagrin overspread the features of the other.

"You win, kid!" he said, with precious good-fellowship in his voice. "Now, look over here at this head, and I'll put my hands behind my back while you're a-doin' it."

A moment later, Calloway was looking down upon the closely cropped head which bent below him. With an expert's eye he decided on a spot an inch above and to the rear of the ear.

"But," said Rayburn, "the head is shattered."

Then the butt of a revolver crashed down upon the spot which had been selected for its target, and the speaker lunged forward across the dead lion.

"I would say that'll be good for six hours!" said Calloway, with the air of a physician making a diagnosis. "That will be time a-plenty."

The day following that upon which Calloway, accompanied by a woman, shook the dust of Puma from his boots, was the hottest in the memory of the

oldest inhabitant. From a fleckless sky the sun heaped its blistering rays between the parallel rows of adobe huts that formed the one street of the town where it lay impounded, flat and intolerably calm, like a stagnant pool of flame.

"You can take it from me, it's pure hell out on the plains to-day," commented one of Jerry's patrons, as—evidently on the theory that two negatives make an affirmative—he sipped a glass of the liquid fire served by his host.

And to the spent man and beast who drifted, vague and indeterminate, in a dust cloud of their own making, across the desert, that vivid metaphor would have seemed altogether inadequate.

It was not until the first breath of evening came bitter-sweet from the distant hills, that Rayburn, upon his well-nigh foundered burro, reached Puma. Through the raised dust his patient animal tottered until, with a sigh, it came to a halt before the saloon. The rider dismounted and, treading with the studied care of the very weak, entered the building.

Jerry recognized the symptoms of his guest before he did the man, and had the antidote before him in a trice. Then, as Rayburn gulped the white-hot fluid, he exclaimed:

"Well, if it ain't the kid! Look like you were out after nine o'clock last night, sonny!" Then, as he tossed an envelope on to the bar, "well, here's something might cheer you up!"

With the feeling of detachment experienced in dreams, Rayburn took the missive and sought a remote corner. Then he tore the envelope and read.

It was not easy to grasp the sense of it. When he tried to think, his wits would whirl off again from a dead center, as they had done an æon ago, when day had been sent crashing out. But after a long while, he managed to arrange the contents in the order of importance.

Belle had gone away. She would always love him. She was not really a widow after all, for her husband had returned and claimed her. Life would be hell without him, she told him, but they must both be brave. He must leave Puma and return home. She wanted him to take up his career and be a good, strong man, for her sake. She signed the note: "Farewell forever."

Under the blood and grime Rayburn's face went white, and his fingers interlaced and clenched convulsively. Then, slowly his head went up, and, like the coming of dawn, a new, glad light was born in his face. "That's her!" he breathed. "True as steel!" Then, in a voice of incredible wonder, "and there were those who could speak lightly of her. God!"

As one in a trance he arose and stumbled outdoors under the first, faint stars.

"It was given that she should come to me not to love, but to lead!" he breathed in a hushed voice. "God grant she shall not be ashamed!"

He threw his arms wide and drew a deep breath. At the end of the squalid street he could dimly discern the faint twin lines of the railroad, their dwindling perspective pointing eastward.

"And all this time, while I've been building muscles and listening to smutty stories, I thought I was making a man!"

Then, quite irrelevantly, he visualized a pair of wise, pensive eyes, and like an echo caught the words: "Just a child praying at make-believe. Go, and if you ever grow to be a man, and come back, you'll find me waiting."

"No wonder she turned me down!" he mused. And then, because the heart of youth is a cup for fate to fill and drain at will with the divine wine of love, and because the cup seemed strangely empty just then, his head went up and his jaw took on a new, strong line. "But I'll bet she won't

next time!" he vaunted. Then, swinging smartly on his heel, he started in the direction of the railway station.

Inside the saloon, an inquisitive habitué leaned across the bar. "What's wrong?" he said. "The kid cut up over Belle's taking Calloway?"

"Yes, but he'll come around," assured the host. Then, "say, you fellows have heard me say that Belle never had a heart. Well, here's where I eat them words, and if anybody wants to help me wash 'em down, the poison's poured, horn in!"



A CERTAIN ONE WHO DIED

WHAT ways withdraw you now, Delightful One,

What cloudy uplands that were dark before,

Forget their darknesses forevermore,

Seeing you there, still radiant from the sun?

Down what old, grievous byroads do you run,

Your gayety more deft than any spring,

To turn them April for the grace you bring,

Your hair to light their long oblivion?

Surely to-day that brooding silence breaks

For speech that was a thin and silver bell,

Nor will those quenchless stillnesses dispel

Your laughter and the music that it makes.

I had imagined Death the last, dark star!

How shall I think of these things where you are?

DAVID MORTON.



The Woman Courageous

By Charles Beadle

Author of "Uncle,"
"The Breaker of Idols," etc.

SOME one has said that the most terrible moment in a woman's life is when she realizes that her youth has gone. Jean Mordaunte met this terrible specter of truth one afternoon in March, as she stood before her mirror.

Through the half-open window came the distant hum of traffic on Fifth Avenue. The pale sun streamed across the room, throwing an exaggerated design of the lace curtains in shadows upon the soft carpet, turning the old-rose color into splotches of vivid pink. Clad in her latest imported gown, she knew that she looked her best; yet nothing could hide the first, gentle tracings of the passing of years, hastened and intensified perhaps by the tender care she had lavished upon her children.

On the regular features and the soft, gentle mouth there was the devotional beauty of motherhood; but in that moment, she saw, perhaps, as the world sees. The knowledge came with suffocating certainty. She realized, in a detached sense, which produced a feeling of nausea, why her husband had lost the loverlike worship of many years' standing. She sank down upon a settee struggling against a bitter storm of tears. This soul-and-body searching was not voluntary. For the past twelve months, many gray fears had

lurked within her mind, and until this moment she had not dared to confirm deliberately what she knew must be.

But with the same courage with which she had met the lesser troubles of life, with which she had resisted the mother's instinct to spoil her children, she faced the inevitable. Even her bosom friend never suspected the agony welling in her heart that afternoon as she chatted nonsense and sipped tea in a crowded drawing-room. But late that evening, when she returned home, worn and fatigued with the round of social pleasures, she faced the problem anew.

At twenty-one she had met and married a man who had, for many short years of happiness, measured up to her ideal, as far as it is possible for any human to do. He had been a struggling attorney—together they had been, in the true meaning—for ten years, while he forged ahead on the road to success. He was not a brilliant man intellectually, but indomitable perseverance promised to take him far. Until the last twelve months there had never been a serious rift in the lute. Then, gradually, a change as subtle as the Soros had come between them. She noticed that they spent less time together; followed, upon his side, by fits of exuberant affection. She was not naturally a perversely jealous woman,

but intuition, corroborated by observation, told her that there was another influence in his life. Gradually the breach, without comment on either side, grew. His caresses became mechanical, devoid of the fire of a lover, performed like a duty. Increasing social and professional demands served as excuses for his frequent absence.

At last, unable to muffle the pangs of uneasiness, Jean sought to identify her rival among the many women of their acquaintance. Being intelligent, Jean strove to see with the man's eyes, and knew that Yvonne Dankin was sensuously beautiful, young, lithe, with large, yearning eyes. She was of the type of women known throughout the ages, who find the sweetness of life in luring men to them, to break them utterly, and who, smiling, pass on to fresh conquests. Yet Jean did not, for a moment, entertain the fallacy that Harry could possibly be made to see Yvonne as she was, until after she had finished with him. As she watched them talking one afternoon, watched the languorous eyes caressing her husband, her heart sank. What charms could she summon as counterattraction to the sensuous beauty of her rival?

Once, as if she were conscious of the wife's eyes upon her, Yvonne looked around straight at Jean and smiled insolently. When they took their departure, Yvonne kissed Jean, and Jean, feeling as if she had been stung by a serpent, kissed her in return effusively. The eyes of the two women met in a challenge which both understood and accepted. Yvonne smiled contemptuously. Jean's lips tightened to a thin, ruby line. That evening the Mordauntes had an engagement to dine out together, but Harry pleaded a sudden appointment with an important client, so Jean went alone. She knew where Harry had really gone.

Jean returned early, wholly unable,

for the first time, to stand the strain of masking her misery. Immediately, she sought the sweetest consolation by visiting little Jeanette in the nursery. Long and silently she bent over the cot where the child lay sleeping, biting her lips in a spasm of agony at the thought of the father. At last, softly sweeping back the mass of tumbled dark hair, she kissed Jeanette softly. She had found the courage to face the situation with some degree of equanimity.

A woman may know a man as a man can never know a woman. Jean's husband was, at heart, really a good man. It had been a strong vein of sincerity and worship of the good and beautiful in both natures which had brought them together in the first instance, and cemented a decade of perfect love. That fact was her chief, if not her only, hope of retaining him. She knew that he must suffer agony at the thought of hurting her. Although a good woman, Jean knew and faced the facts of life. She knew exactly what manner of fascination women of Yvonne's type exercise over men. Jean earnestly believed in the indissolubility of the marriage tie, possibly because she was a type of woman who once having given her love could never retract. Harry, she knew, believed in divorce, if love were really dead. In her heart, she felt as every woman is prone to do, that even if he went, he would surely return to her. All the natural, primitive woman in her rebelled at the idea; and besides, there were the facts that it would mean the ruin of his career and, more precious to her than anything, the tarnishing of her children's name.

Little sleep had Jean that night. But, by the birth of the glaucous dawn, she had taken her courage in both hands, and decided to gamble upon a plan of campaign all that she held dear in life. The first result was a sardonic jest of fate, or a common result of the immutable law of cause and effect. At

breakfast, Harry remarked, as he gave her the usual marital peck, that she looked quite haggard and tired, and suggested that she ought to go away for a change of air.

Some two days later Jean met Yvonne in one of the shops. They chatted gayly and seemingly with great affection. As if by an afterthought, Jean pressed Yvonne to dine with her and her husband. Yvonne smiled as she detected the first move in the game, and consented languidly. The following evening Jean casually remarked to her husband, as they were driving back from a supper party:

"Oh, Harry dear, I met that charming Miss Dankin yesterday. She really is beautiful! Quite an Oriental type!"

"Yes," assented Harry, nonchalantly, "she is rather an unusual woman."

"Oh, and I asked her to dine with us next Thursday. I knew you were free then."

"Asked her to dinner!" echoed Harry, in startled surprise.

"Yes, dear. Why not? I thought you rather admired her?" she responded, affecting mild astonishment.

"Oh, yes, of course. I mean as you said, she is rather unusual, isn't she? Er—it was awfully good of you, little woman. I—er—here we are! No, it's the wrong street."

Jean, for the moment, felt that she was winning, and smiled affectionately in the gloom, thinking, "What a fibber you are, you darling!"

On the Thursday morning, before going to his office, Harry was exceptionally subdued at breakfast. Before he left, he remarked with a palpable effort at nonchalance:

"Oh, by the way, dear, I may have to dine out to-night with a client; if I do, make my apologies to Miss Dankin—and the rest, of course!"

"Yes, dear," responded Jean, and sighed, for well she knew that he would

dine at home that night if he had to put off twenty clients, just as he had often sworn he would do in order to dine with her in those far-off days, although there were no clients at all, then.

Jean had invited three other guests who could be relied upon to disappoint her at the last moment, with the consequence that Yvonne was compelled to dine *en famille*. After dinner, during which Harry had been rather constrained, dimly conscious that Yvonne was unusually brilliant in an effort to eclipse the dignified matronly rôle of his wife, little Jeanette—the eldest boy was away—was much in evidence. Yvonne naturally perceived the maneuver, and lavished extravagant regard upon the child, yet the move was so far successful that Yvonne lost control of her feelings once, and shot a malevolent glance at Jean, who smiled quietly, in acknowledgment of first blood.

During the evening, Jean sang songs which held tender memories for her husband of early days, knowing well that behind her back, her rival was exerting all her sensuous power to annul these sentimental associations. Yvonne countered later with some rollicking French chansons and passionate songs, which lost nothing by her full, rich voice and inimitable verve. So the man was swayed first by one influence and then by the other; uncomfortable, when he was allowed to think, but wholly unconscious that the two women, having declared open war, were engaged in the first, fierce battle for him.

Combatants and prize secretly breathed a sigh of relief when, toward eleven o'clock, Yvonne announced that she was due at another house. Before Harry, the two women kissed each other fondly on the cheeks and made divers promises to renew their friendship. Meanwhile he stood apart, with his hands deep in his pockets, glaring at an inoffensive grandfather clock,

and swearing savagely beneath his breath.

Some six weeks later, when she received an affectionate note from Yvonne, pleading indisposition as an excuse for declining another invitation to dinner, Jean knew that her rival feared to do battle on her own ground; that she had won the first bout. Yet on reflection, she realized that Harry, who, for three days after the first dinner, had returned to something of his old allegiance, but had since fallen back again, must have had some say in the matter. Jean had known well that the proximity of her rival and herself would cause him acute pain. That had been calculated. Now there was nothing left save to play the last and desperate move in her gamble for love and happiness, the chief point of which was to force matters to a crisis.

Not without many misgivings and much lonely pain did Jean force herself to carry out her plans. To pause, to reconsider, to contemplate the possibilities of defeat, was to lose. Once having made up her mind, she must be resolute at all costs. Pleading ill health, she decided that she must leave town for the sea. She veiled her eye to hide the pain, and bit her lip till the blood came at the involuntary look of relief in Harry's eyes as she told him.

She went to Maine, taking Jeanette with her, deliberately leaving an open field to the enemy. Her consolation and strength lay in the certainty that she knew her husband's character far too well to think him capable of a sordid intrigue. He would never be untrue to her before breaking off all relationship; he would first sever the bond of trust between them for good.

Jean had proposed to be away a month. At the end of that time she wrote to say that she would stay until the end of September, as the weather was so fine. It would be good for Jeanette. After she had sealed and

dispatched her letter she kissed Jeanette passionately and fled to her room, crying at the thought that she was driven coldly and deliberately to use her child as a pawn in a game of chess.

Another three weeks of anxious torment and iron self-control went by before the expected letter, the summons for which she had prayed over and dreaded, arrived. Harry, whose letters, of late, had been models of conventional connubial correspondence and monumental in their vagueness, wrote that Jean must return to town immediately, as a matter had arisen, which was of vital importance to them both, and which could only be settled personally. As no torture is so wearing as anxious suspense, Jean almost sighed with relief; particularly as she had feared sometimes that he might deal the blow by post, although such action would not have been like him.

She arrived at Grand Central at eleven that evening. Scarcely a word was exchanged, until they arrived home. Then he declined to broach the subject until Jeanette had gone to bed. He even refused Jean's caressing plea to kiss the child "good-night" in her cot. Jean drank some wine and pretended to eat, while Harry sat in an armchair with his head between his hands. As he got up and began to pace up and down the room, Jean maneuvered her chair, so that her face remained in shadow. Watching the grim, set lines of his face, the dear blue eyes under the tawny yellow thatch of hair, and the strong swing of his shoulders, all the past welled up and choked her; the impulse to cry out, to throw her arms round his neck, and plead for her very life tore at her will, seeming to strangle her slowly. She fought hard and desperately, summoning all her courage in the knowledge that to give way at the crucial moment was to lose everything. He opened his lips twice and cleared his throat nervously.

"Jean!" he commenced, wheeling suddenly in front of her.

"Yes, dearest," she answered clearly, looking him straight in the eyes.

He winced at the endearment and turned away as if he feared his resolution would break. "Jean," he continued, rapidly pacing up and down again. "I—I've sent for you. Something serious, very serious, has happened. Something I never thought possible to either of us—until lately. I—Oh God! it hurts me to tell you."

"Tell me, Harry," she urged softly.

"I would rather do anything than hurt you, but I must, because I can't help myself. Jean!" He wheeled again to confront her, but dropped his eyes as before. "You remember years and years ago we promised one another that if ever—if ever there was anything, if any one else came into our lives, that we would tell each other?"

"Yes. I remember *everything* that happened years and years ago."

"Oh, God, don't!"

He turned his face away and leaned against the mantelshelf. She followed him with her eyes steadily, absorbingly.

"I—I've got to keep that promise now," he continued, staring at a bookcase. "My God! I never dreamed it would be so hard. You remember I said that I did believe it possible for a man or a woman to love more than once, to love again more than ever before? I really meant that, but I didn't believe it could happen to me, to you and me. Jean, I've got to confess that now it's true! I—I hate myself for it, but I love another woman!"

He paused, as if expecting an explosion of grief.

"You think you do," Jean answered quietly. "I've known it for some time."

"But I—I do," he insisted. "Otherwise I wouldn't have—have said so."

"Well?"

Harry started and looked at her. She met his eyes calmly. He turned

away at once, not knowing that her nails were almost piercing the palms of her hands. He did not reply, seeming suddenly at a loss.

"Do you know who she is?" he asked at length.

"Oh, yes! Yvonne Dankin."

He glanced at her swiftly, almost in a frightened way.

"Did you know that when you invited her to dinner here?"

"Of course."

"Good God!" he whispered to himself. "Don't you hate me?"

"No!" she said quietly, as if surprised. "I love you and I always shall!" He moved uneasily and began to fidget with an ornament. "What do you intend to do?"

"I—I must go to her," he said thickly. "I—there is no other course."

"Have you considered what that will mean to the children and to your career?"

"Yes. But——"

"But what?"

"I have been through hell!"

"I know that, too, Harry," she said gently.

He moved an arm as if warding off something invisible.

"Things cannot go on like this. It is impossible. There is money, thank Heaven! You and the children will be provided for."

"You think you love her very much, Harry?"

Despite her control, a wistful note had crept into Jean's voice.

"My God, could I do this if I didn't? I—I must be mad, but go I must! I must sacrifice everything for her!"

"Are you sure you will be happy?"

"Good heavens, yes! You must hate me, but I tell you the truth."

"Thank you. But you have always done that, Harry."

"No"—he shook his head miserably—"not always, lately."

"Poor Harry."

"Why don't you upbraid me, reproach me, call me the rotter I am!" he suddenly demanded, glaring at her as if he hated her.

"Because, dear, I love you! Because I want you to be happy, even if it is with some one else. That is love, Harry. Do you love her like that? Does she love you like that?"

"Oh, don't! You don't understand."

"Ah! I wonder! Harry, to me this means the loss of everything save the children, thank God! They shall never forget you! We shall always pray for you and love you."

"Don't!"

His voice came in a falsetto whisper. He threw himself into a chair, clutching at his hair. Quivering with the supreme effort of control, she rose. Fortunately, he had not the courage to regard her face as she seemed to tower above him, an appalling figure of dignity. Yet she was not looking at him as she demanded:

"You mean this, Harry? You are sure that you do love her? Absolutely?"

"Yes." The noise was affirmative rather than the syllable.

"You realize what that will mean to yourself as well as to the children?"

"Yes." He glanced up at her with strained eyes, but she turned her head away and began to play with the same ornament he had dropped, uncomprehendingly. "But you—I have thought and thought—and there is no other way. I mean—you said that when love was dead you preferred——"

"I am not talking about myself." The timbre of her voice had grown harder in the effort of control. "I am thinking about the children and you, your career, whether you love this woman, whether you will be happy."

"But, Jean—I—why should you think of me? I don't deserve it from you!"

"That is love. Don't you know

that?" Her voice choked, but she succeeded in turning the sob into the resemblance of a laugh. After a silence she stole a swift glance at him through dim eyes. He was staring fixedly at the carpet, brows creased, perplexed. This time she nearly laughed in hysterical delight, but she hardened her voice again.

"You are determined, Harry, and realize exactly what you are about to do?"

"Quite," he murmured, stubbornly, without removing his gaze.

"Very good, then." With an air of finality she turned away from the mantelshelf toward the door, and contrived to mask the tone into almost everyday casualness. "Have you had your things packed? I wish I had been here. The servants always do it badly."

"But I—I'm not going till to-morrow," he said brokenly, from under his hands.

"But, Harry, that is impossible." She half turned, holding the door open. "We swore long ago that the same roof should never shelter us when once love had died on either side," she said mendaciously. "Come, Harry, be strong. We part to-night! And it is better so. The children need never——"

"To-night!" he gasped. "Now? To-night?"

"Yes, dear! I will have your things sent on to you. I cannot bear any more now. Good-night, Harry. It's good-by, my dearest, but——" She laughed, a throttled hysterical sound of weakening control. "Let's play at pretend, as we used to do with the children. D'you remember?"

His face was hidden, but she could not even see his figure through the blinding storm of tears.

"Goo' night, Harry!"

Fiercely fighting, she walked steadily, firmly, out of the door, and shut

it quietly behind her; then, gasping sobs tearing her bosom, she picked up her skirts and rushed upstairs.

In less than three minutes there was the sound of the banging of a door, the hurried patter of footsteps. The man appeared in the room, his face furrowed and twisted with pain, great tears welling in his eyes.

"Jean! Jean!" he called brokenly.

She half raised her face from where she had flung herself on her knees by the bed, and looked at him piteously.

"Don't you want me? Won't you take me back?" he stammered half inarticulately. "I—I've been mad—mad! It's you I love! Jean! For God's sake, Jean!"

A strange, crooning cry answered him, as she held open her arms.



CANARIES

BY the railings the prisoners are clinging,
Who are even as we.

(Nearby two canaries are singing,

Whistling and flinging with glee.

A silvery hail of notes

Out of their gold-pale throats

From a painted cage in a tree.)

And we walk decorously.

We look askance at the silent guard,
Whose eyes are blank as a graveled yard,

And pass him carefully—

Lest we be shut away

From the whole of the perfect day—

Less they should bind us—they

Who make their insanity law—

In a garden railed under an acre of sky,

And a gate clamped down like a paw.

And so we are careful and cunning.

(The canaries are whistling with glee.)

By the railings the prisoners are sunning—

And, oh, it is sweet to be free!

LOLA RIDGE.

Ainslee's Book of the Month

JURGEN, by James Branch Cabell; Robert M. McBride, New York.

SOME few there must be in every age and every land of whom life claims nothing very insistently save that they write perfectly of beautiful happenings," James Branch Cabell asserts in the preface to his book, "The Certain Hour." In the achieving of "Jurgen," his latest novel, Mr. Cabell has brilliantly proved his title to be numbered among those few in our age, those very few in our land, who write perfectly of beautiful happenings.

The tale Cabell tells—he calls it a comedy of justice—is of the sublime adventure of a poet-pawnbroker, Jurgen, "a monstrous clever fellow," who, for defending things as they are, earns the gratitude of Koschei the Deathless, who made those things. The gratitude is expressed in the immediate disappearance of Jurgen's wife, the acidulous Dame Lisa, and the poet's subsequent meeting with Nessus, the Centaur of the wonderful shirt, and Serena, Goddess of Mediocrity, of all middle things, even of Wednesday. A poem, discreetly hymned to this Mrs. Grundy of the gods, gains Jurgen, clever fellow, her aid in his contemplated journey among the worlds.

Throughout the earth, in the land of myths and legends, in hell and in heaven, Jurgen searches for what he thinks is justice, for some reason for things as they are, for an escape from the awful fear of universal futility. "You gave me no faith in anything," he cries bitterly to God, "not even in nothingness. It was not fair." And all Jurgen learns, from angel or devil, is that even if it does not seem fair,

there is no help for it, and it is best to be as other persons and believe implicitly in one's own importance.

A stylist with a skill so genuine and intriguing, so free from mawkishness and prudery as to make him stand alone among American writers, James Branch Cabell has made of this book, "Jurgen," a novel that may be compared, and with no blushings of the author, with such masterpieces as "Penguin Island" and "The Revolt of the Angels." Passages of sheer beauty that would seem inevitably to be tinged with the "flavor of mellowness" are saved from the slightest suspicion of sentimentality by a cynicism that is confounding, a mockery that, for the very delicacy of its ridicule, reacts more forcibly than the most mordant irony.

Elusiveness, a sensitiveness to the sound, feel, and look of a word, and, above all, a remoteness from the battle—these make Cabell. His purpose, and the only moral purpose of any artist, is a seeking after beauty; and Cabell is saved from the innocuousness into which those few of his contemporaries who follow that same purpose frequently fall, by a point of view positively startling in a scholar and a gentleman—the point of view of an intelligent man.

"Jurgen" has sweep, breadth, canvas—a gorgeousness that never shows tinsel. Its humor graduates from the thinnest of subtleties into a rollicking burst of Rabelaisian joviality. Its characters are drawn from folk tales, classic myths, and the Bible; its background is the universe with all its best possible worlds.

L. V. B.



In Broadway Playhouses

By Edwin Carty Ranck

Stage Hands Across the Sea

OUR playwrights, managers, and actors are, according to all reports, having everything their own way nowadays in Dick Whittington's big town. And what a queer reversal of theatrical conditions this is! Not so very many years ago, no play could bear the magic motto: "Charles Frohman presents" unless it had been "made in London." But now reports have it that few plays are being presented in London, even by native playwrights, that have not first received the stamp of New York's approval. "If it goes in New York, it will go in London" seems to be the new slogan, and our stage hands across the sea are showing Londoners new wrinkles in stage efficiency.

This unprecedented state of affairs is due directly to the war, and it should have a sobering effect upon all American playwrights who take their work with any degree of seriousness. For it means just this: England is turning hopefully to America for new ideas, new thoughts, and new inspiration in the theater, and our writers should see to it that these hopes are not disappointed. The American playwright with ideas and ideals has the greatest opportunity of his life to do some of the things he has always dreamed of

doing. Nor need he be discouraged at the thought of his play ending unhappily. If a tragic ending is the logical ending for his play, it will not be a handicap in England, provided his play is vital and sincere. There will be an eager welcome awaiting his brain child in a country where the tired business man is still, thank God, an unknown quantity in the life of the theater. An Englishman likes to have some of his fun all the time and all of his fun some of the time, but he does not like to have all of his fun all the time. The American, however, likes all his fun all the time—even in the midst of a serious play. Hence the epidemic of maudlin drama that annually visits Broadway.

These conditions in the American theater may be traced to the aforesaid t. b. m.—a *genus homo* that has nothing above the eyes except a bald spot. He it is who has been the arbiter of our stage destinies for many years; he has told the manager what he thinks the public thinks it wants—which is never to think. And that is one more reason why our drama has remained at such a dead level of mediocrity. However, the latest news from London changes all that. The ambitious American playwright can now write for a London audience, knowing that if he

puts the best of himself into a play, it will receive a respectful hearing from English managers whose ears are cocked Manhattanward.

It should be a source of pride to Americans to know that "Monsieur Beaucaire," an operetta based upon Booth Tarkington's romantic story of the same name, was the work of two Englishmen, and the London critics last winter adjudged it to be one of the best musical pieces that the English stage had seen in many a long day. The authors received their inspiration from America, from the work of an intensely American author who lives in Indiana, and who had used England as the locale of his story—transplanted atmosphere that has now gone home to roost.

John Drinkwater, the English poet with the prohibition name, has written a highly successful play based on the life of Abraham Lincoln that will probably have been seen in New York by the time this article appears. It took an Englishman to see the tremendous dramatic possibilities in the life of the great American.

Walt Whitman heard America calling, and English authors now appear to be hearing the same summons. It is the insistent call of a lusty infant that will not be denied, and England is listening with the smile of a mother who is proud but somewhat terrified over the rapid growth of her Gargantuan offspring. That certain condescension which Lowell found in the English attitude toward Americans is rapidly vanishing, if, indeed, it has not entirely vanished. Most certainly it has disappeared from the English theater. There is an element now of deference in the attitude of the London manager toward his New York *confrère* that was conspicuously lacking before the war. Frankly, this is because the English manager knows that we have something over here that he does not possess

over there, and the great commercial success in London of such plays as "Friendly Enemies" and "Kick In" made America's golden voice peculiarly alluring to English managerial ears, proving once more that money talks as insistently in the land of Shakespeare as it does in the land of Rockefeller.

In the ante-bellum days a New York manager was often forced to cool his heels in the waiting room of the London manager who had something that the New Yorker wanted. Now that the shoe is on the other foot, the Londoner is all honey and cream to his American rival. But when the American takes over a successful play that has been widely acclaimed in New York and undertakes to lease a theater from the kindly English manager, he is forced to pay three or four times as much rent as the resident manager is paying for the same playhouse. That, however, is a sincere compliment to the drawing power of an American attraction. Remember, it was Edward Sheldon's play, "Romance," that nearly broke all running records in London!

The great demand for American plays at the present time, however, is not, after all, such a compliment as one might suppose, when one stops to consider the tragic fact that England lost an appallingly large percentage of writing men in the war. There is never at any time a preponderance of authors who can turn out successful plays, and England is compelled perforce to look to America for stage material.

Just consider, for a moment, England's play market to-day: Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones have written themselves out. Shaw's pacifism and "vegetable spirits" appear to have quite, quite killed him with his quondam public. Galsworthy is more preacher than playwright, and John Masefield has quit writing plays. Lord Dunsany does not appear equal to the strain of writing a long play and—and—well, that's all

there is—there isn't any more. Small wonder that England hears America's stage whisper with glistening eyes and, like *Old Bill*, promptly answers: "Ullo!"

To-day, all pessimists to the contrary notwithstanding, there is more genuine idealism abroad in this country than ever before in its history and it is spreading and growing all the time. The voice of the profiteer is still heard in the land, and Prohibitionists, Bolsheviks, and other "ists" are still running amuck and snapping at the heels of civilization, but high above the chaos of civic and industrial reconstruction burns the torch of our forbears that has been handed on to generation after generation, ever lighting the way to bigger and better things. And no corner of our new civilization is going to be more radically affected than the segment devoted to the arts. In this idealistic readjustment of values, the American stage is going to come into its long-withheld heritage, and the birthright that was sold for a mess of pottage will be restored to a patient people.

Sothorn and Marlowe received a royal welcome when they returned to the stage in a sumptuous production of "Twelfth Night," done in the new manner with simple stage settings and atmospheric backgrounds. Miss Marlowe as *Viola* has lost none of her old-time fascination, and her lovely voice and clear enunciation were a delight to hear. Surely there is no one on our stage who can bring out the verbal values of Shakespeare's lines as does this gifted actress. She makes one believe in Shakespeare again, and the tarnished gilt of conventional Shakespearean elocution becomes pure gold at her magic touch. Give us more Julia Marlowes, oh, my soul!

Mr. Sothorn gives a masterly performance of *Malvolio*. He has the intelligence to grasp all of the subtle shadings of this comic creation, and the little touches that he adds here and there

merely serve to accentuate the delicate humor of Falstaff's antithesis. In the scene where *Malvolio* finds the letter, Mr. Sothorn acted with consummate art. I cannot imagine any actor of our time approaching this performance. It is the highest peak of comic art. His pantomime work was extraordinary. How much he can convey to an audience by the elevation of an eyebrow or a disdainful sniff! From the moment that he makes his stage entrance, the audience begins to chuckle and never leaves off when Mr. Sothorn is on the stage.

Rowland Buckstone ranted and roared most unintelligibly as *Sir Toby Belch*, but redeemed himself somewhat in the drunken scene. J. Sayre Crawley, a veteran Shakespearean actor, was thoroughly satisfying as *Sir Andrew Aguecheek*. Vernon Kelso as *Feste*, the clown, was thoroughly delightful. He has an excellent voice and sang the "Come away, come away, death" song most admirably. Miss Norah Lamison deserves especial commendation for her intelligent performance of *Maria*. She was intelligible all the time and read her lines as if she were not overawed by the fact that Shakespeare wrote them. The rest of the support was adequate.

Booth Tarkington's greatly overrated farce-comedy "Clarence" is an amusing bit of flubdub playwriting thoroughly permeated with that overclever persiflage that Mr. Tarkington seems to feel is essential to good playwriting. The characters are the characters that one never sees in real life. They are really caricatures of real-life men and women, with their idiosyncrasies exaggerated and overemphasized.

Mr. Tarkington calls his latest effort a "comedy," but I have never in real life seen men and women act as Mr. Tarkington's puppets act. There may be persons like *Mr. Wheeler*, *Mrs. Wheeler*, *Bobby Wheeler*, *Cora*

Wheeler, Clarence, and Hubert Stem, but they are usually to be found in the comic supplements of the Sunday newspapers.

"Clarence" is merely a new version of "The Admirable Crichton" with a returned soldier playing the part of *Crichton*. He comes into the household of *Mr. Wheeler*, a preposterous American father of the *Foxy Grandpa* type, who allows his noisy and obstreperous little daughter to annoy every one about the place by her tears and chatter. When the audience is beginning to believe that *Mr. Wheeler* is preparing to elope with *Violet Pinney*, his daughter's governess, paterfamilias suddenly becomes tamely reconciled to his absurd wife and *Clarence* elopes with the governess.

Alfred Lunt proved himself to be a good vaudeville actor as *Clarence*, ex-soldier and horn player, who eventually turns out to be an authority on something or other with his name in *Who's Who*. Little Helen Hayes, who gave a really admirable performance as the dream child in "Dear Brutus," was tiresome and nerve-racking as the ubiquitous child nuisance, *Cora Wheeler*.

"Clarence" has many clever lines and many unnecessary lines, but it was all too much like horseplay to suit me, and I was frankly bored by everything except the acting of Miss Elsie Mackay, who was beautiful and unaffected as *Violet Pinney*, the only real human being in *Mr. Tarkington's* gallery of caricatures.

"The Storm," a noisy melodrama by Langdon McCormick, belongs to the pre-Raphaelite school of playwriting. It is of the genre of Eugene Walter's "The Wolf" and tells the story of a French-Canadian girl left, by the death of her father, alone with two men in a cabin in the wilds. They both desire her, but one of them, a regular William Farnum here, wants to make her his wife. There is a fight in her room at

night, a "Way Down East" snowstorm, and a remarkably realistic forest fire.

The play is redeemed, however, by the extraordinarily good acting of Miss Helen MacKellar as *Manette Fachard*, the Canadian girl torn between two lovers. She visualized the character remarkably well, and in the bedroom scene she was sincere and natural. Miss MacKellar has charm and great natural ability, and is worthy of a better play than "The Storm."

The plot of "The Gold Diggers," Avery Hopwood's comedy of chorus girls, admirably staged by David Belasco, is a combination of "Polly With a Past," "Up from Nowhere," and "Moonlight and Honeysuckle." A certain young man is threatened with disinheritance if he marries a pretty chorus girl, and his uncle, the threatening disinheritor, is taken in tow by said chorus girl's chum who undertakes to glorify her friend and make herself disreputable in the uncle's eyes with a bogus past. Of course, said uncle falls in love with the chum who has no difficulty in living down her imaginary past.

Miss Ina Claire gives a clever but overemphasized rendition of this newest Polly with a past, but the real acting honors fall to Miss Jobyna Howland, who gives a sharply-etched impersonation of a cynical but honest-to-goodness chorus girl, from whose lips fall many witty and mordant truths about life behind the footlights.

"Moonlight and Honeysuckle" is a maudlin concoction by George Scarborough, who once wrote white-slave plays, put together to furnish opportunities for Ruth Chatterton. The theme is as ancient as the moss-covered bucket that once hung in the well, and Miss Chatterton gives a matronly and sophisticated performance in the part of a supposedly naive young girl. Not once did Miss Chatterton's performance ring true. She was never for a moment the girl that she was supposed to be.

Miss Lucile Watson was her own irresistible self in one of those society rôles that she always adorns. "Moonlight and Honeysuckle" is merely that—and nothing more.

"An Exchange of Wives" is another one of those alleged society plays by Cosmo Hamilton, where the women all talk as if they hailed from South Brooklyn or Greenpoint. It is hard to imagine how any one can write such consistently bad dialogue as Mr. Hamilton. However "An Exchange of Wives" will not be with us long.

"The Girl in the Limousine" is another of the same sort but even worse. It is one of those bedroom farces that are now becoming painful by reason of their dullness. If the girl in the limousine had only stayed there and not ventured out upon Broadway she would have been a wise damsel.

Those two old favorites, McIntyre and Heath, are now being featured in a musical extravaganza entitled "Hello Alexander" that is anemically amusing. Of course, the two veteran black-faced comedians are always funny, and

they received a cordial greeting from the audience.

One of the very best of all the recent plays is "Adam and Eva," which tells the story of that most neglected of all American animals, the father of the family. He is the real hero of "Adam and Eva"—the god in the home machine around which spins one of the merriest and best written comedies of the season. It is the work of George Middleton and Guy Bolton, and is immensely superior to "Clarence." There are real human beings in "Adam and Eva," and those who are inclined to believe that our native dramatists have lost the knack of writing good comedy should see this play. There has been nothing in New York this winter that I can more wholeheartedly and sincerely recommend to readers of AINSLEE'S.

There is every indication that some of the newer American playwrights are learning the art of characterization at last. There has been a noticeable improvement this season in the quality of the workmanship turned out that is a most hopeful omen for the future.



NASTURIUM

(Sonnetina)

THERE is no green more warm, more cool,
 More languorous, and yet more brisk
 Than that your leaves display, each disk
 Shaped as if patterned from a pool
 In the seraglio at Stamboul,
 The mirror of some odalisque
 Compelled to dream, though born to frisk,
 A lotus bud enmeshed in tulle.

Was it because you understood
 The curse of yashmaks that you wear
 An open, henna-colored hood?
 Was it not that which made you dare
 Leave sultan, shade, and sandalwood
 For humble bee and sun and air?

RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

WE are going to let two of your favorite authors do most of the talking this month. When we asked Katharine Hill and Arthur Crabb to tell you about themselves, we knew that they would send entertaining letters. We have only one quarrel with their contributions: they exhibit too much modesty.

"I began to write," admits Miss Hill, "when I was four years old. I printed the stories in little books made out of writing paper doubled again and sewn down the fold. Thus, I have been at it for more than a quarter of a century. I was born and brought up in Washington, but have been, by choice, a New Yorker for the past ten years. I must be a very indolent person, for I seem never to have done anything worthy of mention, except the writing of four or five short stories a year, a novel that has yet to be published and, just lately, my novelettes in AINSLEE'S. I read incessantly, but I am fond, too, of everything one does out of doors that is not a game. I don't like games, because I play them very badly. I am devoted to cats, music, and salt water."

NOW read the genial fun that Arthur Crabb sees fit to poke at himself: "In my youth, I heaved a sizable rock at a perfectly good and far-distant street lamp, entirely confident that I could not make the distance and, even granted the carry, that the chances of a hit were negligible. I scored a bull's-eye and my surprise was exceeded only by my regret that the village cop was, at the moment, behind a tree hardly three steps back of me. In some way, I took a shot at a story about two years

ago, and by some miracle hit the editorial lamp—without, of course, blackening it. The cop in this case was Mrs. Crabb, who, when she saw the check, cried: 'Write, ye tarrier, write!' Straightway I wrote an anti-suffrage story, and with the proceeds purchased a fur coat for Mrs. Crabb. It was a fine-looking coat on a fine-looking suffragette. And, considering the theme of the story that paid for it, can't you imagine the grand mixture of emotions inside that coat? Well, anyway, I got to writing seriously, and my friends began to caution me, for the love o' heaven, not to get temperamental. But I ask you, how can a man get temperamental who lives on a village street, nurses his automobile himself, has a flock of kids that make satan look like an angel and a better half that not only makes angels look like satan, but is a super-college graduate, a suffragist, an educator, president of several important things, and doesn't smoke cigarettes? Take my word for it, it can't be done."

THE novelette in the February AINSLEE'S will be by Vennette Herron. It is called "The Long Love Trail," and leads the reader from New York, up the Amazon River, and into the heart of the Brazilian forests. There will be strong short stories by Arthur Crabb, Charles Belmont Davis, Sandra Alexander, and Reita Lambert Ranck. Anice Terhune tells the story of Mrs. Blennerhasset, an early American "super-woman." May Edington's absorbing serial, "The Way the Wind Blows," and Louise Rice's gypsy tales will be continued.

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My book, "HOW TO BECOME AN EXPERT ELECTRICIAN," has started thousands of young men on the way to splendid success. A new edition of this has just been printed. I want every young man interested in Electricity to have a copy, and will send you one **ABSOLUTELY FREE AND PREPAID**. Write me to-day.

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As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works I know exactly the kind of training a man needs to enable him to get and hold good positions, and to earn big pay. I have trained hundreds of men who are holding splendid electrical positions. Many are now successful **Electrical Contractors**.

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Delay never got you anything. Action is what counts. Get started—and get started now. Write me, or send me the coupon, right NOW.

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Dept. 431

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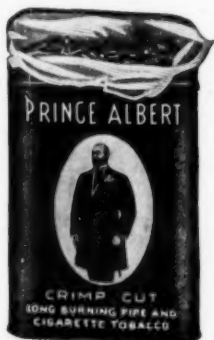
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Talk about ringing the bell every time you take just a *more little smoke!* You agree with your old fellow citizen, General Approval, that Prince Albert puts a man on firing line with a pipe or cigarette, and keeps him there that it sends all previous smetto records to the rear-rank that it just slams in one go time on top of another so so happy-like, you realize heretofore you've been hum regular-man-sport with wrong ammunition!

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“Kodak” is our registered and common law trademark* and cannot be rightly applied except to goods of our manufacture.

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BROOKS' APPLIANCE, the modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that relieves rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No valves. No lies. Durable, cheap. Sent on trial to prove it. Protected by U. S. patents. Catalogue and sample blanks mailed free, send name and address today.

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What every young man and Every young woman should know
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"He Deposits \$500 a Month!"

"See that man at the Receiving Teller's window? That's Billy King, Manager for Browning Company. Every month he comes in and deposits \$500. I've been watching Billy for a long time—take almost as much interest in him as I do in my own boy.

"Three years ago he started at Browning's at \$15 a week. Married, had one child, couldn't save a cent. One day he came in here desperate—wanted to borrow a hundred dollars—wife was sick.

"I said, 'Billy, I'm going to give you something worth more than a loan—some good advice—and if you'll follow it I'll let you have the hundred, too.

You don't want to work for \$15 a week all your life, do you?' Of course he didn't. 'Well,' I said, 'there's a way to climb out of your job to something better. Take up a course with the International Correspondence Schools in the work you want to advance in, and put in some of your evenings getting special training. The Schools will do wonders for you—I know, we've got several I. C. S. boys right here in the bank.'

"That very night Billy wrote to Scranton and a few days later he had started studying at home. Why, in a few months he had doubled his salary! Next thing I knew he was put in charge of his department, and two months ago they made him Manager. And he's making real money. Ours his own home, has quite a little property beside, and he's a regular at that window every month. It just shows what a man can do in a little spare time."

Employers are begging for men with ambition, men who really want to get ahead in the world and are willing to prove it by training themselves in spare time to do some one thing well.

Prove that you are that kind of a man! The International Correspondence Schools are ready and anxious to help you prepare for something better if you'll simply give them the chance. More than two million men and women in the last 23 years have taken the I. C. S. route to more money. Over 100,000 others are getting ready in the same way right now.

Is there any reason why you should let others climb over you when you have the same chance they have? Surely the least you can do is to find out just what there is in this proposition for you. Here is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, simply mark and mail this coupon.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS BOX 3615, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

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7-22-19

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OWN YOUR OWN ORANGE ORCHARD. Beautiful Fruitland Park. Write for information how you can own a easy terms. Lake County Land Sales Association, 321 Beauty Street, Fair Park, Florida.

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Personal

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But now, after over twenty-five years of steady growth, I have far more students than were ever before taught by one man. I make them skilled players of the piano or organ in *quarter the usual time at quarter the usual cost.*

To persons who have not previously heard of my method, this may seem a pretty bold statement. But I will gladly convince you of its accuracy by referring you to any number of my graduates in any part of the world. There isn't a state in the Union that doesn't contain a score or more skilled players of the piano or organ who obtained their *entire* training from me by mail.



DR. QUINN AT HIS PIANO—From the famous sketch by Schneider, exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition

Investigate by writing for my 64-page free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ."

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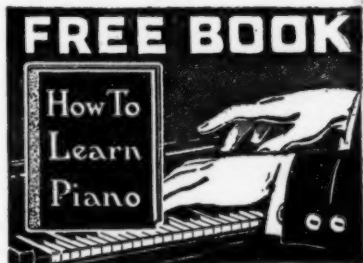
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Please send me, without cost or obligation, your free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ," and full particulars of your Course and special reduced Tuition offer.

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Address.....

Marcus Lucius Quinn Conservatory of Music
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One Hour a Day Will Raise Your Pay

MORE money! Isn't that the ambition of all of us? Isn't it YOUR ambition? The things you can do with money make life worth living—help you buy such luxuries as a home of your own, a car, better clothes, and have money in the bank. The mental satisfaction of making big money is a luxury itself. It gives a man confidence and pep to know that he has the ability to command big pay. To "make more money" is both a natural and healthy ambition—one you can accomplish any time you are ready.

Your ambition to hold a better job, to earn bigger pay, can be fulfilled when you realize that salaries are paid on a C. O. D. basis. Your pay check is a cold-blooded indication of what you can deliver. Therein lies the key to satisfying your ambition. **DELIVER MORE.** Your boss won't take the time to improve your delivery to him. That's up to you. When you can deliver more you'll find employers eager and willing to bid for your services. So many can deliver but a part of the requirements that there is naturally a big market for the man who is above this class—the man who can think and act for himself.

Set aside one hour a day to raise your pay—one hour that will not interfere with your work or pleasure—one hour that does not now earn you a cent. Designate in the Coupon below the work in which you would like to earn more money and we'll show you how to do it, without risk or obligation on your part.

American School of Correspondence
Dept. G41 Chicago



TRAINING—THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Please tell me how I can qualify for the position marked X.

- | | |
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| High School Graduate | Business Manager |
| Electrical Engineer | Cert. Public Accountant |
| Electric Light and Power Superintendent | Accountant and Auditor |
| Hydroelectric Engineer | Bookkeeper |
| Telephone Engineer | Stenographer |
| Telegraph Engineer | Fire Insurance Expert |
| Wireless Operator | Sanitary Engineer |
| Architect | Master Plumber |
| Building Contractor | Heating and Ventilating Engineer |
| Civil Engineer | Automobile Engineer |
| Structural Engineer | Automobile Repairman |
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Name.....

Address.....

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If it's a game of tennis, a long walk, dancing, skating—wherever you are or whatever you're doing—**remain alive!**—you want leg comfort.
And, if you have worn the

E. Z. GARTER

"Wide for Comfort"

you know the luxury of unrestricted leg muscles and circulation.

The wide, soft band fits snugly. It cannot slip and it cannot bind.

Single Grip E. Z.,
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In medium, small, and large sizes.

Prices subject to change without notice. If your dealer cannot supply you send his name and the price to

THE THOS. P. TAYLOR CO.
Dept. ST BRIDGEPORT, CONN.



PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM
Removes dandruff—Stops Hair Falling
Restores Color and
Beauty to Gray and Faded Hair
50c. and \$1.00 at drugists.
Hiscox Chem. Wks., Patchogue, N.Y.

HINDERCORNS Removes Corns, Callouses, etc., stops all pain, ensures comfort to the feet, makes walking easy. 10c. by mail or at Drugists. Hiscox Chemical Works, Patchogue, N. Y.

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If so, you are NOT wearing
Buchstein's Vulcanized Fiber
which is soothing to
your stump, cool,
neat, light,
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much thicker
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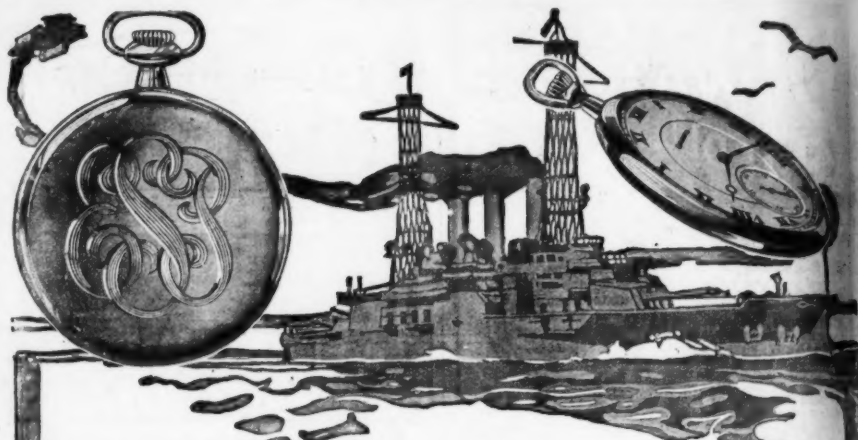
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And yet you may get a 21-jewel Burlington for only \$3.50 a month. Truly it is the master watch, 21 ruby and sapphire jewels, adjusted to the second, temperature, isochronism and positions. Fitted at the factory in a gold strata case, warranted for 25 years. All the newest cases are yours to choose from. You pay only rock-bottom price—yes, "bed rock-bottom price"—the lowest price at which the Burlington is sold.

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You don't pay a cent to anybody until you see the watch. We ship the watch to you on approval. You are the sole judge. No obligation to buy merely because you get the watch on approval.

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If you agree that it is the finest typewriter, regardless of price, pay for it at the rate of \$3 per month. We ask no partial payment in advance. You have over a year to pay. And you'll have the Oliver all that time. There is no need to wait until you have the full amount.

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